THE DRUID'S CAVE

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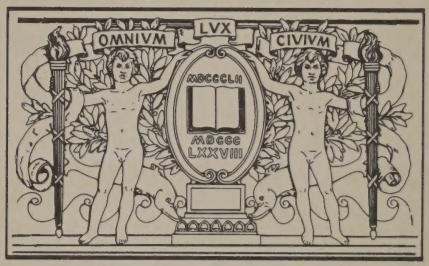

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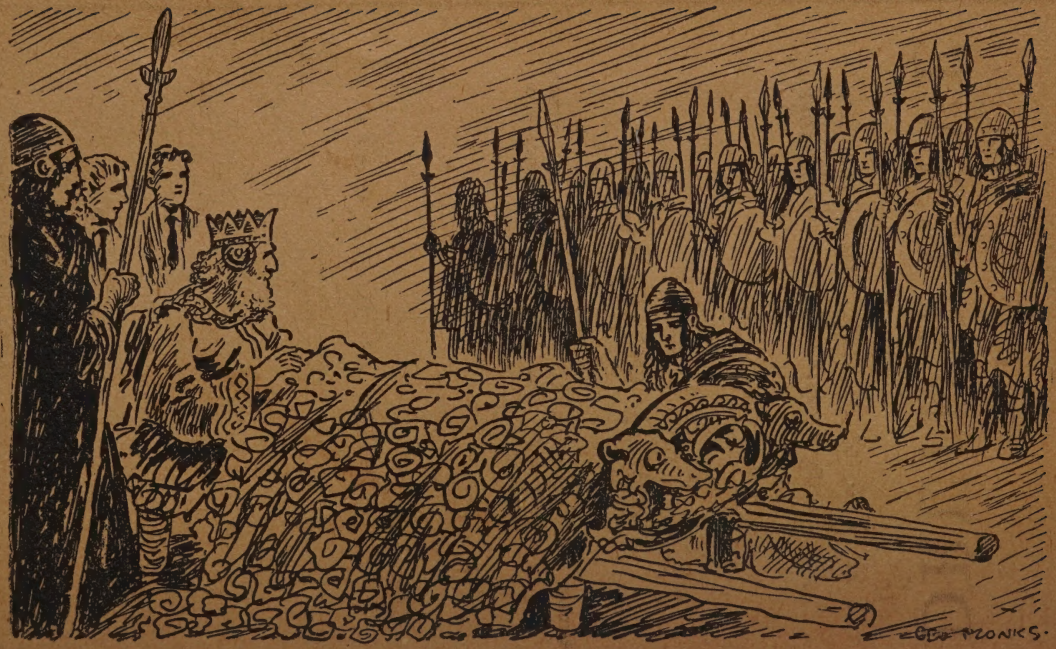

"THE HOMAGE OF THE FIANNA TO YOU, O KING." (*See page* 156)

THE DRUID'S CAVE

A Tale of Mystery and Adventure for Young People of Seven to Seventy

By

AODH DE BLÁCAM

Author of "Donnán Dán," "Towards the Republic," "The Ship that Sailed Too Soon," "Songs and Satires," "Holy Romans"

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE MONKS

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Dom mhaicín Eoin Giolla-Mhuire

Gidh nach bh-fuil
Bearla aige go
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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	THE MYSTERIOUS ARROW	9
II	THE MARCH TO DUN-NA-GAEL	21
III	AT THE COURT OF CONALL MÓR	34
IV	THE ENCOUNTER IN THE DARK	46
V	COUNCIL OF WAR	57
VI	TIDINGS ON THE WATERS	69
VII	AMBUSHED!	82
VIII	TOPPERLEY REX	88
IX	COLUM'S DIARY OF THE RETREAT	104
X	"STITESMANSHIP"	114
XI	IN THE CAVE OF SKULLS	127
XII	A FENIAN RESCUE	142

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
"The Homage of the Fianna to You, O King" *Frontispiece*	
"As stealthily as a snake the creature crept from the heather"	26
The King Receives His Guests	39
The Encounter in the Dark	55
What the Glasses Revealed	67
Bob's Dash to Portabeg	75
Re-enter Topperley	91
"I saw a pair of human eyes"	97
Topperley's Ruse	116
"Topperley was on a rock near the fight"	130
The Cave of Skulls	133
"Our position was now desperate"	154

THE DRUID'S CAVE

CHAPTER I

THE MYSTERIOUS ARROW

A Curious Discovery—Who Shot the Arrow?—The Hungry Englishman—Munitions of War—A Spy in the Night.

WHEN I went last summer to live at Portabeg —a quiet little port on the Donegal coast in the shadow of Mount Arrigal—I little expected to encounter adventures stranger than any I had ever read of. I cannot tell whether I shall be believed as I unfold my story, but to the doubting reader I can only say: "There are stranger things in life than in any book, and among the ancient hills of Donegal are hidden some of the strangest."

The reason of my going to Portabeg was that I was studying for my Final, and hoped to perfect my Irish by living in a Gaelic-speaking district. My hosts were relatives

who had a house overlooking the harbour. I used to spend my evenings in hard reading, but in the mornings I would ramble on the hills, swim, or go boating with my young cousins, Manus, the devil-may-care young scapegrace, and Colum, the bookish young scholar, in their father's boat, *An Gruagach*.

It was on one of my lonely morning walks that I found the Cave where our adventures began.

That morning I walked over the heathery cliff road by the sea. About a mile and a half from Portabeg I came upon a little cluster of houses that might be called a village. It was on a huge lift of land, as if upon a mighty subterranean cavern, while vast rocky hillocks and gorge-like watercourses, overhung with tangled purple heather and sprinkled with blue "fairy-thimbles," made the place secret and remote. A little barefoot girl who was minding the mountain cattle on the rocks told me the place was named Cushandree.

Cushandree—the Druid's Cave! No, she could not tell me how the place got the name, but there was a great cave under our feet, she said. By a difficult, zig-zag path on the very cliff's face, I made my way down to the beach. When I stood on the shingle, I saw before me a vast cleavage running into the rocky face of the land. The sea ran into the cavern, and I

could see glittering green figures of 8 twisting and untwisting on the dark and gloomy waters of the interior. I made my way along a rocky ledge that entered the cave, and stood inside. The plashing of the waters echoed hollowly as if in a great chamber: in the distance, through the darkness, I could see a fan of daylight glimmering.

I made my way to this light, and found that a wide cleft opened from the cave into the land, a large stream of mountain water flowing between rocky walls into the cave at this point. But what amazed me was to notice marks of the work of hands on the rocky porch by which the stream entered: chisellings, spiral scrolls and the mysterious Ogham lettering in which Gaelic inscriptions were made two thousand years ago. All that I could decipher just now was some fragmentary letters:

MAN . . . N . . . CL . R

This looked like Manannán Mac Lir, the name of the ancient Irish sea-god. I resolved to return next day with my notebook.

I was making my way back by the walls of the cavern, when I heard a swishing noise behind me, and the sound of a boat being piloted between rocks. What was my surprise, on turning, to see *An Gruagach* entering the cave from the gorge—that is, floating down the fresh-water stream.

Colum stood in the bows, helping the boat through the rocks with an oar, while Manus sat at the stern, binding a handkerchief over his forearm. I saw the trace of blood on the linen.

"Hallo! what are you two doing here?" I asked. My shout echoed noisily in the great stone hall as the boat slid into the darkness. "Bring the boat here and take me on board: it is I—Robert."

Colum, as I could see in the faint green light reflected on the waters from the sun without, hesitated, while Manus hastily pulled his coat on, covering his arm. Then Colum sculled the boat towards me; I entered it, and we floated towards the sea-opening, and were soon on the open waters.

In the bright daylight, I noticed with amazement that an arrow, two feet long, stuck in the side of the boat as if it had been shot there, while two bows, made of bamboo sticks bent with the cord of a fishing-line, lay on the floor of the boat. The arrow was less amateur-looking than the bows. I plucked it from the wood—it had pierced deep, and only came with force—and examined it, while Manus and Colum watched me nervously. The wood was well seasoned, the head of ugly steel, and the barb resembled an eagle-feather. 'Twas a deadly-looking missile.

"What does this mean?" I asked Manus.

"Er—we were shooting arrows in the fields beyond, and that one hit the boat."

"You don't expect me to swallow that excuse, surely?" said I. "This arrow was no make of yours: indeed I see you have arrows made of bamboo. This arrow is a business-like piece of murder machinery! And how did you come by a wounded arm? Show me your arm."

Colum was setting the mast and bending the jib at this moment; I saw by the tail of my eye that his face was flaming red. Manus silently held out his arm: the skin had been nastily but not seriously scraped, and I dressed it properly.

"That will be all right in two days, if you put ointment on it. But now tell me what happened. You can trust me. You know I am your friend."

Colum leant over to Manus, while I moved aside to let them whisper.

"We'd best tell him and ask him to keep it secret," said one of them. "It's the way to keep him from telling, and he's a good fellow."

Then Colum in his precise way said to me: "Listen, Cousin Robert, will you promise not to tell a soul what you saw—I mean the arrow and Manus' wounded arm—if we tell you?"

"Yes: that is if you are plain with me.

But you know your people wouldn't take it kindly of me to let you two get yourselves shot at without making some inquiry. Don't mind my plainness. I'll stand by you if you will be open with me."

"Good man, Bob!" said Manus. "But it's hard to tell you what happened. . . . We were—er—shooting ptarmigan with a friend at a place up the stream, and—er—we were attacked . . . we had to run for the boat . . . one arrow grazed me and that other stuck in the boat. . . ."

"But who should attack you?—and with old-fashioned arrows too?"

"That's just what I can't quite explain. You'd have to come with us almost to believe it . . ." said Manus.

"Aye," put in Colum, "let Cousin Robert come with us to-morrow. Listen," said he to me, "we didn't mean to tell you or anyone what's going on up that river, but we trust you because you are decent about promising not to tell, and because you are fond of Irish—*that* shows you are the right sort. So if you are ready for a real adventure, we'll take you with us to-morrow. Only you mustn't ask us what it's all about till you see with your own eyes."

I thought a minute what could the mystery be, and decided to go through with it.

"*Tá go maith*," said I. "I'll do as you ask and come to-morrow."

A good breeze carried us in less than an hour to Portabeg.

* * * * * * *

When I came down to tea that evening there was a strange figure in the room. This was a fat, flush-faced man, with blue coat, red waistcoat, striped tie, brown trousers, yellow boots, and spotted socks.

"Allow me to introduce you to Mr. Horatio Topperley," said Mr. O'Donnell, my host. "Mr. Topperley is the distinguished editor of *The Bull Dog*, and is spending a holiday in our wild country to enjoy the air and study our conditions, on which he is writing important articles in his powerful organ of public opinion."

Unless I was mistaken, a wink quivered in my host's left eye.

"Pleased ter meet yer," said the Englishman in gushing style. "I 'ear you're at the University. I'm a great believer in 'igher edyercation myself. . . . Excuse me, Mr. O'Donnell," he said, turning to my host, "but I'd like yer to order me some ammandegs with my tea. We Englishmen," said he to me again, "like a good square meal. England's greatness is built on the 'earty appertites of her people."

"Some what, did you say?" asked Mr. O'Donnell.

"'Ammandegs—eggsandam."

"Oh, yes, Mr. Topperley, I had already ordered you a little condiment to our plain fare: I know you are wearied after your journey from Dungloe."

"Thank yer, but you'll excuse my arsking. I find you Irish don't always understand John Bull's appertite. It's the same in Frarnce. I found it very 'ard to get a good meal in Frarnce. I usually carry a book of cookery recipes with me when traverling; perhaps I may lend it to yer cook? My faverite dishes are marked with red ink. . . ."

"Where did your walk take you to-day?" asked my host as tea began.

"As far as Cushandree," said I.

"Ah, that is an interesting spot," observed my host. Manus and Colum looked awkward and watched me. I gave no sign.

"There are many legends attached to that place," went on Mr. O'Donnell. "The people say that ghosts have been seen by the early light on Beltaine and Samhain mornings—sailing from the caves on ghostly curraghs. I never heard the right story, but maybe you would get it from Crochur McSweeney, the balladmaker. I am speaking of a haunted

cave we have along this lonely coast," continued my host, turning to his English guest.

"Ornted, is it? Now that's very interesting as an example of peasant superstition. I must go there termorrer and take some snapshots of the place. The pictures will go well in an artercle on Roman Catholic backwardness. . . . Would yer please parss the mustard? 'Am without mustard is like soder without w'isky."

* * * * * * *

Tea finished, I retired to my room to study. I worked late, and supposed that the household had retired. I was thinking of turning in, when a low tapping came at my door. "Come in."

Manus entered on tiptoe, and closed the door behind him. "We want to put the provisions aboard the boat," he said, "and so as not to wake the house, I thought we could let them down from your window."

My room was in a wing of the house on the side next the sea. The harbour strand was only a stone-cast distant. "Why not load the boat in the morning?" I asked.

"We don't want everybody to see what we're taking," Manus explained.

"What mysterious merchandise have you to take?" I asked.

"You'll see," said Manus. He opened the door and whistled softly. Colum appeared,

loaded with bags and traps. Manus tiptoed away and brought a load himself. I saw piled on my floor fishing baskets containing provisions, coils of loose ropes, boxes and two shot-guns. "What are the guns for?" I asked.

"They'll be better than bows and arrows," said Manus. "I borrowed them from the Englishman's goods. By the way, have you any arms yourself?"

"Arms?"

"Yes, why not? If you have a revolver you had best get it cleaned to-night."

"Whew!" said I, "this looks serious."

"Remember: you promised to keep our expedition secret. If you don't want to come because there may be some shooting——"

"If there's likely to be shooting, it's my duty not to let you two young warriors go filibustering without me! But I wish you had not bound me. It puts me in a queer position to let you two go off on a shooting affair even if I do go with you."

"We knew you'd stand in, Bob," said Manus. "But we're only taking the arms for precaution. And by the way, you had better bring those field-glasses of yours as well as your revolver."

"It looks like a Robinson Crusoe business," said I.

"It is just that. Bring all the portable equipment you have." Manus picked up my electric torch: "This will come handy too," said he.

Colum all this time was looking at my books. He was reading a book of poems in Old Irish. He had often laughed at my book-Irish, but I had the laugh of him this time, for though he spoke Gaelic as a native, he would not understand Old Irish, I thought.

"Isn't this fine?" he cried, and began reading one of the poems.

"How did you learn to read that?" I asked.

Colum looked confused, but before he could answer, Manus cried: "Bother your books; let us get on with loading the boat."

He tied a rope to my bed and fastened the bags to the other end, which he let down to the ground outside. He slung the two guns on his back. "Hold the bed," said he, and got out of the window himself. Then he carefully let himself down hand over hand, till he was on the ground. He picked up the bags then and made his way (using my electric torch) to where *An Gruagach* lay beached. By the moonlight, I saw him lift the things on board and stow them in the little cabin. He made two journeys, and swarmed up the rope again.

"Hist!" said Colum, as Manus clambered through the window. "Who's that?"

A figure moved darkly along the strand.

"It looks mighty like that Englishman," said Manus. "Look at the waistcoat of him."

Colum turned out my lamp. We watched the figure pass under us and out of sight by the side of the house.

"That *Bull Dog* fellow is too nosey by half," said Manus. "We must keep an eye on him. Get to sleep now, Bob. We'll have a lively time to-morrow. Meet us at the boat after breakfast."

CHAPTER II

THE MARCH TO DUN-NA-GAEL

Through the Cave—A Narrow Escape—The Secret of the River—The Fort is Reached.

IMMEDIATELY after breakfast next morning I took my equipment and went down to the beach. My two warrior cousins were waiting for me; Manus in his eager way already had the mast of *An Gruagach* up and the two sails hoisted.

"Jump in, Bob," he cried. As I entered the boat he pushed it from the shingle and ran it into the water, jumping into the stern and hauling the mainsail to the wind while Colum tightened the jib. At once the boat began to slip easily through the tide, and the quay and houses began to dwindle from us.

"We're off, Bob," said Manus: "are you looking forward to our adventures?"

"I would be," said I, "if I knew what we are about. Why are we voyaging by water round the half-dozen headlands and through a cave, when we could go by the road?"

"Aye, that's a question you'll find a queer answer to," said Manus.

We reached the cave. The mast was lowered, and Colum, standing in the bows, gently sculled *An Gruagach* into the darkness. The mystery of our expedition and the strange atmosphere of the cave had affected me, and when I fancied I heard an intake of breath somewhere in the darkness, I started.

"Did you hear that?" I asked.

"No," said Manus; "you're dreaming."

"I could have sworn someone was in the cave and made an exclamation of surprise when we came in."

"What would anyone be here for?" asked Manus.

We came to the river water and lowered the sails. Here Colum went to the stern of the boat, while Manus came forward. Colum punted us through a sort of rocky, winding passage through which the river flowed before it entered the cave. The walls of this passage grew smaller and lower and the water widened as we travelled through the great heave of land that rises by the sea. We entered a kind of lagoon, and Colum could now row. Manus was

alert. He took the two shot-guns from the cabin and loaded them. One he held in readiness to fire.

"Draw your revolver, Bob," said he, "and keep a sharp look out on the starboard shore while I watch port. Hist! what's that?"

Colum rested on his oars, and we listened intently. "I thought I heard something down the river behind us," said Manus, "but there can't be anything there. Go ahead, Colum."

I was surprised, as the sides of the lagoon lowered, that we were entering well-wooded country: a rare thing in Donegal to-day. Soon Mount Arrigal came into view over the waving green. Colum now turned the boat inland, and we came close to the banks where a smooth shelf of rocks made a perfect landing stage.

"Colum!" said Manus, "take the double-barrelled gun and stand sentry."

Colum did this, while Manus and I hauled the boat up the rock into a sheltered place under overhanging foliage. "It won't be seen here," said he: "it wouldn't do for our friend the enemy to find *An Gruagach* and cut off our retreat." He divided the baggage between the three of us. "Form up, now," said he.

"Why don't you tell the two of us to form fours?" asked Colum.

"None of your sarcasm," said Manus. "Somebody's got to be captain on an expedition like this. Bob doesn't know the country, and I'm two years older than you: so obey orders, please. Go in front with your gun, and I'll bring up the rear. Follow the usual path."

We went forward then along a ribbon-like footway through the heather. The path wound, but steadily rose, though big rocks soon swallowed up the sight of the water behind us, and I lost all notion of our direction. Suddenly Manus stopped, bade us stand silent, and lay on the ground with his ear to the soil.

"There's someone walking near us," he whispered.

"Best push forward quickly," said Colum.

"Let you just obey orders," said Manus.

We went on again. Then Colum stopped. "I'm not sure of our bearings," said he.

"Trust you for leading us astray," said Manus. "I suppose you were reciting some blessed poem to yourself. Wait now till I slip up that bit of a rock behind us and take a look round."

He pointed back to a projection from the heather a hundred feet behind us, and made his way to it, clambering up the rocks till he reached an eminence from which a wide view

over the heathery country could be gained. He now took my field-glasses from his side and began to search the country.

"That's all show with him," said Colum to me. "The place we want is not far off enough to need glasses to seek it with . . . Whew! look there——"

Our eyes started as we saw a figure rising stealthily from the heather just two or three yards in Manus's rear to the left. A shudder of loathing went through my veins at the first sight of the creature—for *man* I could hardly call the pot-bellied, spindle-limbed, talon-handed savage that I saw. The creature was half-clad in rude skins, but its head was more detestable than its unshapely body: the mouth was large like a beast of prey's, and revealed animal-like fangs, and, worst horror of all, there was but one eye—a red, rolling organ set in the centre of a low brow. Was I dreaming?—almost I reeled from my feet at the sight, so strange it was and so horrible: I watched with fascinated and unbelieving eyes.

And stealthily as a snake the creature crept from the heather. In its hand it bore a broad-bladed, deadly-looking spear, that it poised, as if to stab its victim suddenly in the back. Then I broke the spell of wonder that had held me motionless, and raised my revolver to

"AS STEALTHILY AS A SNAKE THE CREATURE CREPT FROM THE HEATHER."

fire: Colum already had his gun ready and was aiming.

On the very instant that I was about to pull the trigger, another figure came on the scene. From the opposite side of Manus to that on which the creature crouched, Horatio Topperley swung round the rock and confronted the would-be assassin!

With a savage yell, the creature sprang back, casting the spear at the same moment.

"Don't fire!" said Colum, and we rushed forward. The creature had vanished into the heather below our path. Manus lowered the field-glasses and looked round in surprise. Horatio Topperley bent and picked the spear from the heathery clump into which it had harmlessly passed. And the four of us met with wondering and inquiring looks.

"*Tableau!* Ring down the curtain," said Colum in my ear.

* * * * * * *

The Englishman, who was in loud tweed walking attire and carried a Kodak camera, was almost exploding with indignation.

"'Oo the—w'en the—w'ich the—w'y the—'ow . . . w'at's the meaning of this?"

"Please be silent, sir," said Manus, giving his orders in Napoleonic style from the rock. "Bob! please stand sentry and fire if you see the enemy. Colum, attention! Report!"

Colum, speaking in rapid Irish, told what we had seen. "One of the Fomorians," said he, "tried to stab you in the back, when the Sasanach came and put him off his aim. He escaped into the heather, but as you were safe I did not fire at him for fear of giving the alarm by the sound of the gun."

"Right for once," said Manus. "Bob," said he, "you can guess now what's happening up here."

"No," said I. "*Cha dtig liom.* What's all this about Fomorians? It's two thousand years since the Fomorians lived in Ireland."

"Look 'ere," interrupted Topperley. "W'at are you blokes saying about me in that lingo of yours? I believe you're talking German, and I want to know w'at you're doing up 'ere with guns (*my* guns too) and w'y you put that wild feller up to trying to do for me with this 'ere skewer. Tried to do for the editor of *The Bull Dog*, did you? Wait till I put this on my front page next week. *Another Hirish Hattrocity; Attempted Hassassination of a Heditor!* That'll sell well, my boy-ohs, and dish your blooming 'Ome Rule."

"*You* don't need any *assinating*," said Manus to the furious Topperley. "You're *ass* enough already. Consider yourself under arrest while we're in the present pickle. Form up, all!"

Topperley was suddenly cowed when Manus spoke to him in this tone, and walked meekly by my side.

"Double!" said Manus, taking the lead, and we travelled rapidly along the rocky path in a changed direction. Topperley puffed and grunted a good deal, getting indignant again.

"This—*puff*—this is, er—*puff*—an outrage—*puff*," said he to me. "This is—*puff*—Huns' work—*puff*. I'll have a question—*puff*—asked in Parliament about it—*puff*."

"*Stadaigidh!*"

Thus Manus, and we halted on the crest of the rise, where we could see all round us and feel secure from ambush. We could now overlook a large expanse of land. At some little distance, I noticed with amazement a great circular rampart surrounded by a watery moat away over the bog. In the centre of the rampart or fort stood several log buildings of strangely majestic shape, while above the tallest of them floated a blue flag with a glinting yellow design that I could not distinguish at the distance.

"Before we go on," said Manus, "I want a definite story. What actually became of that sorehead fellow?"

"Sorehead? What do you mean?" I asked.

"Aye, didn't Colum say something about a sorehead—or was it a factionist or crank? I

always get Colum's swear-words mixed up in my mind. Perhaps it was a vile excrescence he called him."

"Don't mind him, Cousin Robert," said Colum to me. "That's Manus's idea of a joke. He's punning on what I said about the Fomorian trying to stab him in the back. He got that sort of language from the papers. The Fomorian got away down towards the river," he added to Manus.

"Aye, I suppose we may be sure he was alone, or we'd have had them swarming, and we would have seen some arrows. Besides, he would not have tried to attack me if there were others at hand. They would have tried to take us prisoners instead, off to Tory Island."

"What in the world are you talking of?" I asked. "Tell me where we are and what's happening, or I shall get desperate."

"Well, Bob, you are in Tir Chonaill in the reign of Conall Mór; *you have travelled half a mile and two thousand years up Awandree, the Druid's River*, and you are looking down at Dún-na-Gael, the fortress of that same Conall Mór, cousin of the King of Ulster and nephew of the Ard-Rì of Ireland!"

Then Manus turned to Topperley, and spoke in English. "Look here, Mr. Bull Dog," said he. "We didn't ask you to come

after us, but you seem to have been lying in wait for us at Cushandree. You followed us, and you nearly got a Fomor spear inside you that was intended for me. You'll find yourself a bit out-of-place where we are going to——"

"No, young-fellow-my-lad, that's w'ere yer wrong. An Englishman *never* feels out-of-place."

"Um, we shall see. But, anyway, don't blame us if you do. I'm responsible for your safety, and I order you to obey until I manage to get you shipped back to Portabeg and safety."

"Orl right; w'en one's in Ireland one must put up with your queer Irish ways. But ain't it time for grub? W'at 'ave you lads got in your barskets?"

"You'll have to wait a while for a meal," said Manus.

"Now, now, don't be 'Uns," said Topperley.

"Give this fellow a sandwich to keep him quiet," said Manus to Colum.

He himself was busy all this time in piling a little heap of dry heather. Then he suddenly cried: "Bad luck to it: I forgot to bring matches."

"That's easily remedied," said Colum. He took an old envelope from his pocket, unscrewed the magnifying lens from the end of my field-glasses, and focussed the rays of

the sun in a point on the paper. In a few seconds the paper caught fire, and with it Colum kindled the heather.

"Good," said Topperley. "Making fire—*munch*, *munch*—to cook the grub—*munch*, *munch*—are you? That'll be better—*munch*, *munch*—than these cold sandwiches. Let me—*munch*, *munch*—do the cooking. I have my cooking-book—*munch*, *munch*—in my pocket."

"Sorry to disappoint you," said Manus. "This fire is made for something other than cooking." He took off his coat, and with it fanned the dense column of smoke which rose into the air. The column bent and swayed.

"He's signalling to Dún-na-Gael," said Colum to me. "We could never find our way through the wood and the bog to the Dún unless they sent us out a guide. We often came here before to go hunting with Conall Mór, but yesterday when we came a raiding party of Fomorians attacked us and drove us back to the river. We decided to come to-day with guns to try and force a way through to the Gaels. Look——"

We saw a gilly or kern—a lithe youth dressed in kilts, and carrying a light, short spear, emerging from the trees at the bog's edge. He beckoned when he saw our party.

"Form up!" commanded Manus. "Colum

take the lead, and quick march for Dún-na-Gael."

We marched towards the gilly who was to guide us to the fort.

"We're lucky," said Manus to me. "The Fomors don't seem to have attacked yet, so we may be able to take a share in defending the Northern outpost of the Gaels until the Ard-Rì can send help."

"But what do you mean by defending?"

"Why, the Fomorians have come out from Tory Island again. Everyone thought they were defeated for ever at that battle where Balor, their king, was killed. But just lately they have appeared again on the mainland in force. . . . You'll learn all about it soon, Bob. Cheer up."

"I wish you fellows wouldn't keep talking about me in that foreign lingo," said Topperley. "I didn't get 'arf a bite either just now. Shall we get dinner w'en we get to this place you're taking us to?"

"Silence in the ranks!" said Manus.

At this moment we reached the gilly.

CHAPTER III

AT THE COURT OF CONALL MÓR

In the King's Presence—Strange Bewitchment of the King's Champion—Topperley Gets Grub.

THE gilly saluted us, and bade us follow him, speaking in Old Irish, such as I only knew from the most difficult books of study. Manus and Colum, however, talked with him with perfect ease, as if they were practised in the use of Old Irish.

We passed through a sheer wilderness of bog, varied by clumps of foliage and black lifts of land. The stony path that had been made for the traveller branched into three parts again and again, and sometimes we took the left, sometimes the right, and sometimes the middle path.

"Do you see the idea, Cousin Robert?" asked Colum. "If we took the wrong path at any of these crosses, it would wind for a

distance and then mislead us again with further branchings. We should get deeper and deeper into the bog until we came to a dead end. That is why we needed a guide. Conall Mór had these paths made so as to conceal the true path to the Dún by a perfect maze of false paths."

"I've seen the like at Exhibitions," said I. "But was this Conall Mór's invention?"

"No: 'twas his druid, Cathba's. Cathba says that with only six cross-roads on the main path there are over four thousand ways of going astray. Permutations and combinations. You study mathematics, don't you?—so you can see that is right."

"Yes, I can see how it works. An enemy would have to test the most of four thousand different routes before he hit upon the right road. But how does the gilly remember the right road?"

"Why, three letters stand for right, left, and centre; for instance, ABC. Then the right road is indicated by a line of letters like this: BABCAC, which would mean—Centre, left, centre, right, left, right. The line of letters (whatever three they are) make a word, and so long as you remember this password you can find your way in, by just taking the six directions in turn at the six crosses."

"Splendid!" said I. "Cathba is a genius,

surely. Does it take long to follow the path right in?"

"It would take months or years without a guide, but with a guide we are through in twenty minutes. See——"

We emerged from the black, wavy bogland and stubbly vegetation into a large cleared area, the ground of which was covered with pebbles—sign of incredible industry in their laborious collection and laying down. Some lads were playing hurley a hundred yards away from us on a patch of green. Before us was a moat of clear water, with the shelving, circular wall of the Dún rising beyond. A light wooden drawbridge spanned the moat. Within the vast wall of the Dún we saw great log-built raths, on the tallest of which floated a flag having a golden sunburst embroidered on its blue ground.

"*Salute the flag!*" ordered Manus.

Colum and I obeyed, while the gilly, our guide, raised his spear before him and then dipped its point groundwards before he raised it again with a triumphant shake: it was a graceful and splendid gesture.

"Hi! stop it, young smarty!"

This was Horatio Topperley's exclamation as Manus knocked his cap from his head.

"If you won't salute, you'll uncover before the flag of the Gaels," said Manus, fiercely,

"and if you won't uncover, you'll be made to. Let me tell you," says he, "that that flag is the flag of the high—the high . . . here, Colum (aside), the flag of the high—what is it?"

"The high Milesian race," whispered Colum.

"Um, yes, the flag of the high Milesian race, and neither a Cockney editor nor a Fomorian invader shall be let insult the flag of the high what-you-may-call-it on the sacred soil of Tirchonaill."

"*Maith thú!*" put in Colum: "that was a fine speech. You'll be on the Board of Guardians yet."

"Order in the ranks!" said Manus. "Form up!"

At that moment, the gilly having just blown a peal on the horn which he carried, a peal of music filled into the air, while a piper in bright saffron kilt stepped forth from the gates of the Dún and marched towards us over the drawbridge. He turned before us, and led on into the Dún, playing a joyful march the while.

As soon as we had passed the gates, we were in a spacious circular enclosure. The great sloping wall that descended into the moat water outside was twenty feet thick and as many high. Its inside was cut with steps and had a path at the top, so that defenders could

resist attempts to swarm up it from the outside supposing that the enemy should succeed in passing the bog and the moat. Within this enclosure were a number of raths and smaller houses, with gillies and spearmen passing to and fro, or mending their weapons. We were conducted to one of the houses, and given water to refresh ourselves, before coming into Conall Mór's presence.

I expected Topperley to ask me wondering questions as to where we were and the rest of it, though indeed I was too overcome with wonder myself to feel able to make any convincing explanation. But his first question was:

"Any chance of getting a snack now, do you think?"

"Have patience," said I. "We shall go into the King's presence and dine at his table, no doubt; that is, when Manus has held a council of war with him."

"This 'ere's rum talk," said Topperley. "I don't like orl this about traverling up the river of time, or whatever it was that young feller was telling me. I expect they lived on raw meat in those old times. As if Ireland wasn't backward enough even in the twentieth century. Tell me the truth, now, 'ave we really gone back all that time?"

"It seems so," said I. "That Druid's Cave

THE KING RECEIVES HIS GUESTS

is a gateway into the past, it appears, which my young cousins discovered. We are now at the northern stronghold of the King of Tirchonaill, and are threatened by a savage breed of Fomorians, whose fortress is Tory Island, ten miles out in the sea. . . ."

"I wish I 'adn't come. But if this 'ere is a king's place, maybe the grub won't be so bad. Rum sort of place for a king to live, all the same."

The gilly stood at the door. "Conall Mór awaits his guests," he said.

"Form up!" said Manus. "Bob, bring your field-glasses to show the King, and bring one of the guns. Colum, carry the presents on your shoulder. Topperley, put your tie straight, and try to look a little less red about the gills; bow when I kick you, and keep your mouth shut—except to eat with, and go easy at that . . . if you can."

We walked from the little house across the open to the doors of the great Hall—the *Hall of the Circling Mead*, Colum called it. As we entered, a silvery bell pealed out, and all talk fell silent while the steward cried our names. All present stood, while we passed up the long chamber to the foot of the raised place where Conall Mór sat.

The King rose in his splendour and greeted us, and then Colum began unpacking a basket

which he had brought on his shoulder. At the King's feet he now laid a mirror, a cuckoo-clock, a pocket-knife that had a file and a cork-screw in it as well as blades, a railway book of pictures of Donegal scenes, a pad of drawing paper and a packet of pencils, and a handful of other objects, all of which were strange and precious at the Court of Conall Mór.

"We spent only a couple of shillings in putting this lot together, with old things we had about the storeroom," said Colum to me. "It's a queer thing how what we think nothing of turns out valuable with people it's strange to."

"You are turning philosopher," said I.

The King was overcome with gratitude. "My poor gifts will seem small beside these wonders," he said. And he handed to Manus a skian with rich filigree handle, and ornamented leather girdle for its carrying. To Colum he gave a cloak of green cloth, enriched with a Celtic design and clasped, when on Colum's shoulders, with an inwrought brooch that lay upon the chest. To myself he gave a chain of marble drops and gold that upheld a worked-leather wallet.

He looked on Topperley with curious and unpleased eyes.

"*Tá fáilte romhat, a dhuine uasail,*" said he, lifting a double-handled silver mead-cup.

"Wot's 'e saying?" asked Topperley.

Manus kicked Topperley's shins. "Bow!" said he. And to Conall Mór he said: "This is an unmannerly stranger who followed us against our will, but whom we thought it at least our duty to save from the Fomorians."

"You acted like true Gaels," said Conall. "But ill-manners in the guest do not excuse ill-manners in the host, and I must offer him my gift even though he bows to me unwillingly."

Thereupon he handed Topperley the mead-cup. Topperley took it by the free handle, and, as Conall Mór released it, raised it to his lips.

"Good 'ealth!" says he, and made as if to drink.

Then he flushed with anger. "'Ere, wot's the joke?" he asked. "Giving me a pewter cup and not a drop in it! That's your Irish 'umour, is it?"

"Sh!" said Colum, anxiously. "Be quiet, you fool. That splendid cup is a gift to you from the King, and you have a right to be grateful for your high honour."

"Um," said Topperley, "an empty cup is like an unsigned cheque, or a knife and fork without a joint to carve."

Then Manus showed the King our guns, assuring him that they threw fire that would

scathe his enemies at fifty yards, and slay them at a lesser distance. "We hope to leave shots in some of those vile Fomorians," said he, "that are seeking to drive out the Gaels from the soil of Tirchonaill."

"Like 'is cheek, swanking it with *my* guns," said Topperley to me. "'Ere, your Majesty, or w'atever you call yourself, them there is *my* guns that the nipper's making so free with."

"What does the foreigner say?" asked Conall Mór.

"Be silent, or you shall go under arrest again!" said Manus angrily to Topperley. "Understand that in this place nobody understands your English lingo but Colum and Bob and myself. This is no time for arguing about your guns: consider them commandeered under the Defence of the Gael Act."

Topperley fiddled with his mead-cup, and looked miserable, while Manus took my field-glasses and explained their properties. "With these," said he, "you will be able to see from the Dún the Fomorians getting into their boats on Tory Island. They should prove useful when the campaign begins."

Conall Mór put the glasses to his eyes, and turned them on Ugaine, his *trean fhear*, or war leader, who stood about midway in the hall chatting with a companion. Ugaine was the most powerful man I had ever seen, nearly

seven feet high, and broad almost beyond proportion.

"By my hand," cried Conall Mór, "but mine is a mighty hall: it is twelve hundred paces long if it is one. But what," he added, in a voice of alarm, "has happened Ugaine, my champion? O Ugaine! thou art fallen under a Druid charm; some accurséd trick of the Fomor: thou art shrunken and little, like Eisirt in the story. I could lift thee between two fingers. . . ."

In agitation the King lowered the glasses. Then he rubbed his eyes. "Thou art recovered, Ugaine," he said, with surprise and relief on looking at his champion again. "But —why do you laugh?" he asked Manus, who was laughing in two-double.

"*You were looking through the wrong end of the glasses, Conall Mór,*" answered my lively cousin. Of course, the hall had looked infinitely long, and the people in it tiny, when Conall Mór had looked through the reverse end of the binoculars.

At this juncture the servants began to bring in the dishes. "We will take refreshment and enjoy a little diversion before we hold our council of war," said Conall Mór, as he directed us to our seats at his own board.

We took our seats, and the minstrels at the

end of the hall began to play sweet, low airs upon their instruments, among which the *fidil* predominated.

"This is the biz," said Topperley to me.

But there were to be strange developments before the feast ended.

CHAPTER IV

THE ENCOUNTER IN THE DARK

The King Talks Politics—A Startling Visitor—The Encounter in the Dark—I Pull the Trigger.

CONALL MOR directed us to his own table—a low board surrounded by couches, on which we reclined in Eastern style, the body raised by the left elbow, while the right hand was free for taking food.

"Call this a King's table! Bloomin' picnic style, I call it!" says Topperley in my ear.

At the King's table there were accommodated besides us, his guests, his bard, his brehon, Ugaine his war leader, and a grave-eyed greybeard, whom I rightly guessed to be Cathba the Druid. Cathba was to the one side of me, Topperley to the other.

"Please show me those long-sight tubes," said Cathba to me very simply, and I handed

him my field-glasses. He looked through one end after the other, unscrewed the lenses, as delighted as a baby with a toy. "This clever instrument doubtless applies the principle of the Refraction of Light" (*athchlaonadh soluis* was his expression). "We Druids fully understand the principle," said he, "but we lack your means of applying it."

And so he went on, examining the instrument in detail, and wholly neglecting what was proceeding at the board.

Strange were the dishes with which the King's table was loaded! There were salmon and venison (both cooked in honey) and oat-cake and stirabout. There were heaps of cool, fragrant trefoil, dulse, moss-jelly, apples and nuts. There were flasks of *beóir* and *leann* and honeymead. Beside each diner were little silver dishes filled with honey, in which the diners dipped each morsel, whether of meat or fish or bread.

"I don't like this unny-unny-unny business," said Topperley to me. "I suppose you boyohs 'adn't the sense to bring a bottle of Chutney or Yorkshire Relish in your kit? That 'ud improve this venison a bit, though it ain't so very bad. Any charnce of a second 'elping?"

"My pardon, noble person," said Cathba on my other side, "but tell me whether your

Druids of the twentieth century have contrived glasses for examining *small* objects, on similar principles to these glasses for examining *distant* objects?"

"They have," said I, "and they call the instruments microscopes."

"Choosing the word from the language of the Eastern world, I notice," commented Cathba. "But pardon me again, noble person: your companion is in difficulties. . . ."

I turned to see that Topperley, while I had been discussing scientific research with Cathba, had reached over my place and laid his hand on the Druid's untasted dishes, to which he was helping himself.

With a courteous word, Cathba leaned forward and handed the plates to the Englishman; then turned back to our conversation. "Tell me," said he, "have your Druids made equal progress in the study of Psychology *(anameolas)* as in material invention? . . ."

"Decent old buffer—*munch, munch*—that old lad," said Topperley, on my other side.

Cathba went on asking me question after question regarding the progress of philosophy in the age from which I had come. Then suddenly he broke off.

"Conall Mór addresses you," he said.

The King was looking in my direction.

"Tell me," said Conall Mór, "what is—

what will be—the state of the Gael in the age from whence you come? Where dwell the leaders of the nation—in Tara, or in Ath Cliath?"

"They dwell," said I, "at West Minster, in a foreign land beyond the Ictian Sea."*

"It is there, doubtless," said the King's Bard, "that the men of the Gael sit in the high places, giving law to the poor and taking tribute from conquered enemies."

"No," said I, "but it is *below the gangway* they are seated: and it is Eire that is under tribute."

"What!" said Conall Mór: "by what strange Druid charms are they held in exile that they do not come home and rally the people?"

"By none," said I. "They could come home to-morrow."

"But why—how—I do not understand you," said Conall Mór in a puzzled way. "What are the leaders of the Gael doing in strange lands when the Gael is in bondage? 'Tis as if I should go to Tory Island, where my enemies dwell, when my people were in slavery. Assuredly, when I have destroyed the Fomorians, I must travel down yon River of Time with you and raise the Standard of

* The reader will please note that the adventure took place before the General Election of 1918.—R. MacD.

the Sunburst on the Gaelic soil again. But tell me: in what land are the leaders of the Gael thus beguiled?"

"In the fatherland of this stranger," said I, turning to point to Topperley.

But his place was empty!

"By my hand!" said Conall Mór, "the foreigner is indeed unmannerly, and sore is the case of the Gael to be subject to his kindred, if your words be true. But for the sacred duties of hospitality, he should suffer for thus flouting my table and myself. Where has he gone?"

"Listen here, Conall Mór," put in Manus. "Don't heed all that Bob was saying. They are not the true leaders of the Gael who have exiled themselves among the twentieth century Fomorians, and the time is coming when the world shall see it. . . ."

"Your words relieve me," said the King. "I like not this talk of Eire counting renegades her leaders. But let that stranger be sought. I trust him not."

Colum was whispering in Manus's ear. Then Manus spoke again:

"Colum here has had another of his bright thoughts," said he. "Colum is getting quite wide awake. He guesses that Topperley will be found where your servants do the cooking. Bob!" he added, addressing me, "go you and

look for him: someone with the *Béarla* must go."

Conducted by a gilly, I left the great hall, and passed into the open air. It had now fallen dark, so long had we been diverted with music and talk. The gilly led me to a small building adjacent to the hall, from which there came a glow of light from the turf fire within, where the cooking was done. Against the red luminance, two figures were seen—one that of a worried-looking, skinny man in an apron, the other the unmistakable Horatio Topperley.

Topperley had a book—his cookery-book—in his hand.

"The right way to cook venison," he was saying, "is to cover the bloomin' joint with a paste of flour and water about an inch thick. You must roast it close to the fire and pour 'ot dripping over it. You'll see it orl in this book, sonny. Glaze the top, and serve 'ot with strong gravy."

"*Ní thuigim, ní thuigim*," said the cook, making signs that he did not understand.

Topperley took him by the arm and thrust the book under his nose. "Don't you be letting on you don't understand English," said he. "That's good enough fer a joke. You Irish pertend you don't understand, same as monkeys pertend they can't talk, so as not to be made to work, but you don't kid me. 'Ere,

listen, I'll give you 'arf-a-crown if you'll drop this joking and cook me a dish in the good old English style."

The cook, at this point, was seemingly assured that he was in the grip of a madman, and began to scream for help as I entered. Topperley let go his arm, and looked on me with disfavour.

"Sorry to interrupt you," said I, "but Captain Manus desires you to return to the company lest you offend the King."

"Bless me," said Topperley, "if that dratted infant isn't bent on plaguing me to death. Like his cheek, sending you with that wild fellow that tried to spike me this morning."

"What do you mean, about the wild fellow?" I asked. "Do not insult the King's gilly."

"It's not the gilly I'm talking about," said Topperley. And then I saw his face suddenly turn white. "I'll come! I'll come!" he cried, walking towards me with trembling steps. Then he almost screamed: "Tell him not to knife me . . . I'll come . . ."

He was looking past me over my shoulder with so terrified a look, that I turned and looked at the open door behind me——

A Fomorian figure stood there, cut out with

the red turf-light against the exterior blackness!

There are some startling events which seem to stop the heart beating in you, so that for a moment time seems to have stopped. The scene at which you are looking becomes photographed on your mind, and you think of all the pros and cons of the situation with lightning-like rapidity.

It was just so at this moment. My eyes seemed to travel all over that hideous, strange figure, from the ghastly, one-eyed, wild-fanged head to the claw-like feet. I noted, not without surprise, that the creature now bore a sword of Gaelic pattern in its hand. The weapon was poised as if for a deadly lunge, and the lithe, half-naked figure was taut, as though ready to spring.

How came the Fomorian here? How had the creature passed the secret ways into the heart of the bog, escaped the sentinels, and penetrated Dún-na-Gael? Or had a host of the enemy surprised and entered the Dún? Or was this a spy? What had happened, *ar chor ar bith?*

All this flashed through my mind in an instant, for on the very point of my turning and facing the figure, the creature lowered the weapon and sprang back into the darkness of the night.

In moments of crisis, even timid people lose fear, and the fact that I had just escaped the sword did not shake me at all; in the impulse of excitement I rushed into the darkness, resolved to follow and capture the spy. I found myself in a space enclosed between three log buildings, and I carefully kept clear of the red light that streamed from the kitchen, lest the Fomorian should have the advantage of me. I felt in my pocket for my revolver, hoping to "wing" the intruder before he could strike me, or escape by the one free side of the rectangle in which I stood.

Not a glimpse could I catch of my enemy, but I heard his snorting breath in the dark. I tiptoed on the grass, so that I should move into a position of advantage while still keeping invisible in the black dark. The Fomorian, judging by the sound of his breath and the noise of his clumsy, shifting attire, was also manœuvring for a position in which he would have the advantage.

I could hear him drawing nearer and nearer to me as I found my revolver, unslipped the safety catch, and set my finger to the trigger. This I did with my right hand, while with my left I drew my electric torch from my pocket in readiness to flash it upon the creature before I should fire. I stepped back a couple of feet to be quite free from the reach of the Fomorian

THE ENCOUNTER IN THE DARK

arm, pressed the button of my torch, and lifted my revolver to the aim.

The Fomorian was full in the fan of the white electric blaze, and I saw a look of mixed amazement and terror upon the savage face. As if smitten by an emotion of dread more powerful than a blow, the creature reeled, dropping the sword from its grasp.

I pulled the trigger.

CHAPTER V

COUNCIL OF WAR

"Loo, Loo"—The Clue of the Sword—What the Glasses Told—A Staggering Discovery.

I PULLED the trigger—but only a click followed. My revolver was not loaded! The position was changed now, with a vengeance, and I extinguished my electric torch so as to hide myself in darkness from my savage antagonist.

But he did not attack. He fled! And as he fled I heard him shout "*Loo! Loo! Loo!*"—a strange exclamation that I could not guess the meaning of, any more than I could guess the reason of his flight from an unarmed man. I heard his steps clatter over the shingle of the Dún's interior, and the moon sailed out from behind hurrying clouds just in time to show me the fugitive rushing over the wall of the Dún. I heard a splash as he plunged into the moat beyond.

"'As 'e gorn?" asked trembling Topperley at my elbow.

"He has," said I. "And the two of us are lucky to have escaped this weapon." I picked up the Gaelic sword which the Fomorian had let fall.

Back we went then into Conall Mór's presence, and I told of my adventure. The King shook a chain that hung beside him, and instantly the minstrels ceased their playing, while at a sign from the King his steward conducted all the guests and retainers from the Hall save those of us who sat at Conall Mór's table.

"This is serious," the King began. "A Fomorian spy has found his way through Cathba's secret paths across the bog. How did that happen, I ask?"

Manus, reclining opposite me, was looking wretched, and he now spoke awkwardly:

"Could it be our party was shadowed? . . . We were attacked by a Fomorian before we came to the bog-edge . . . he escaped . . . Bob, was this the same one?"

"Aye, for he had only one eye."

"That is the way with all that evil race," put in Cathba the Druid. "They are *monoculi* one and all, and we Druids are puzzled whether to regard this as constituting the race

a distinct *genus*, or whether it is an accident of heredity *(duthchasacht)*. Will you inform me, noble person, whether the biologists *(beathaeoluihe)* of your age have yet investigated the . . ."

"Pardon me, Cathba," interrupted Conall Mór, "but our position is too serious at this moment for scientific discussions on side-issues. Continue, O Manus, Grandson of Donal," he added, turning to my young cousin.

"We cannot be certain," went on Manus, "whether this spy was the same creature as the one that attacked us, for the beasts are doubtless all very much like one another. But probably it is the same one. Well, then, granted he followed us through the bog, can he now find his way out?"

"He can," said the Druid, "for a special feature of my maze of paths is, that whereas the paths branch before you as you come in, and so mislead you unless you know the key-word, on the way out they converge on one another so that the joining paths leave only one path before you."

Cathba's explanation will be clear to the reader who looks at the letter Y. Suppose you start from the bottom to represent the way *into* the bog, it is clear that you have the puzzling choice of two paths at the cross; whereas on the way *out*, represented by coming

down one of the arms of the Y, there is only one path before you.

"Hence," continued the Druid, "our enemy has probably escaped to his friends by this. My invention was planned for difficulty of ingress and easiness of egress. Allow me to explain this by a diagram . . ."

"Another day, please, Cathba," interrupted the King. "Now, what are we to make of the strange cry, *Loo! Loo!* with which the villain ran?"

"I think I can explain that," put in Colum. "My good cousin Bob switched a bright electric blaze on the Fomorian (so he tells us) just before the creature dropped his sword and fled screaming with terror. Now perhaps your bard will tell us the story of Lugh of the Long Hand, the champion who defeated Balor, the Fomorian King."

"Pardon me, noble friend," said Conall Mór. "But I fail to see what that interesting piece of history has to do with our present council of war, and as we do not know how soon we shall be attacked, had we not better avoid this entertaining digression?"

"Under your correction, Conall Mór," replied Colum, "I think the story will enlighten our case a little."

Herewith the King's bard cleared his throat, and related briefly the story of Balor's defeat.

"Balor was slain, and his hosts of Fomorians," he said, "at the great battle of Moytura, long years ago, and from that day the people of Eire have been free from the evil hordes, the last remnants of whom lived in Tory Island yonder until this present, their new invasion of Ireland."

"Yes, yes," said Conall Mór, "all this we know by rote."

"But he whose prowess won the battle of Moytura," went on the bard, "was Lugh of the Long Hand, the greatest champion who ever trod the soil of Eire. When he rode over the plain, the people thought it was the sun-rising in the distance that they saw, for his forehead was ablaze with light, and his face could not be looked on because of its brightness . . ."

"*Sin é!*" interrupted Colum at this point in the Gaelic narrative. "Lugh's face was ablaze with light. Lugh was the champion most dreaded of the Fomorians. The Fomorian spy, when Cousin Robert's torch blazed in his eyes, ran screaming, '*Loo! Loo!*' Is it not clear that he fancied the light was that of Lugh, come back to defend Eire?"

Conall Mór clapped his hands. "Admirable!" he cried.

"Now," went on the King, "we have to inquire how the spy came by a Gaelic sword. Show me the weapon that he dropped."

I handed the King the sword that had so nearly been my death. He examined it; then suddenly started and shuddered.

"This—this is Goll Gara's sword!" he cried.

"What!" cried Ugaine, the King's war leader. "Show me the weapon, Conall Mór." He examined it. "Yes," he said, "this is that gallant warrior's weapon indeed."

The King's voice trembled as he explained these strange words to us his guests. "Goll Gara," he said, "was our swiftest runner, and we sent him yesterday to carry the news of the Fomorians' attack through the mountains to the High-King of Ireland, asking speedy help. You can guess how the Fomorian came by the sword."

"You mean that Goll Gara must have failed to get through—that he was taken prisoner or slain?" I asked.

The King bowed his head. "Not slain, I pray," he answered.

"Topperley!" Manus addressed the Englishman, who had been entertaining himself while our council was proceeding, by finishing off the remnants of the feast. "Topperley," he said, "produce the spear that was aimed at me this morning, and that nearly hit you. You brought it with you, I think."

"Yes, I brort it with me, young feller-me-

lad, and it'll come in 'andy fer evidence one o' these days w'en I 'ave you orl prosecuted."

"Get the spear, and cut the talk," said Manus.

When the weapon was brought, he examined it, then handed it in silence to Conall Mór. The King looked at the broad, rough iron blade.

"My grief! my woe!" he cried, tossing back his royal head, while his eyes were whelmed in tears. "There is blood on the blade! The blood of Goll Gara! The blood of a Gael! *Fairìor! fairìor géar!* He is fallen; he is dead. I sent him forth and he fell into the hands of the foe! Now lies he cold—slain for the cause of the Gael!"

So lamented Conall Mór, while we all sat silent, and then the King wrapped his head in his mantle, and wept rivers of tears for his lost clansman.

At length the King's bard spoke.

"Conall Mór," he said, "we grieve with you for our lost brother. But he died for Eire, like a hero of the Gael, and his death shall but sharpen our vengeance upon the accursèd Fomorians."

"You speak wisdom," said the King at last, raising his head. "We must swiftly decide how to cope with their attack. For our

messenger is lost, and we are cut off from help. We are clearly surrounded."

"We can do nothing before the morning," said Ugaine, "for if the Fomorians hold the bog-pass, we should only walk into ambush by leaving the Dún in the darkness. Let us post double sentries, and keep half the garrison under arms; then sleep as best we may till daylight comes."

"That is good sense," said Conall Mór: "let it be done as Ugaine advises."

Therewith our council of war broke up. We who were Conall Mór's guests were conducted to the guest-house adjacent to the great hall. As we crossed the open space, we saw the sentries pacing to and fro upon the Dún wall against the stars, while a mighty beacon sent up vast red flames that lit the whole scene.

Sentries were posted, in addition, at the door of the guest-house, and we retired.

Despite the day's excitement, and our present danger, I slept heavily and dreamlessly, for I was thoroughly tired. But at the very break of day, the stirring music of a group of pipers outside the guest-house awakened us.

I shook Topperley by the shoulder and bade him rise. He wrested his shoulder free with an impatient movement.

"'Ang it!" he said, "w'y carn't you let a feller 'ave a little peace. I was dreaming I

was at Frascati's 'aving a nice little supper arfter the theatre. You woke me up before I'd finished the third course. Just like you bloomin' Irish: wouldn't let a feller finish a dream like that, not if you was paid to."

He grunted and rolled over.

"Leave him to his dreams, Bob," said Manus, "and thank goodness he's quiet for once."

A gilly stood at the door.

"Conall Mór sends greetings to his guests," he said, "and invites them to take the air upon the wall of the Dún before breaking fast."

We went out and joined the King upon the high, broad rampart of the Dún. The Sunburst beat in the wind above us; the guard was changing in the courtyard; the sky was of a glorious blueness, flecked with little clouds like a sea-beach in the sky.

Conall Mór pointed behind us. Beyond the other side of the Dún we saw the brown wilderness of bog, with the mountain range that runs from Muckish Mount to Arrigal and Tievelehid standing up in the morning mists like a giant wall.

"There," said the King, "is the rampart that divides us from the plain of Eire, and doubtless the Fomorians now hold all the passes."

He turned and pointed seawards. Below

us was the moat water; beyond it the stone-laid clearing; then the bog again, falling away to the cliffs and sandbanks of the sea-edge. Away out over the sunny, twinkling waters we could see the unmistakable outline of Tory Island. At the right-hand extremity, we could see the tower-like cliffs from which the island is named.

"Doubtless our enemies lurk in a hundred hiding-places between this and the sea," said Conall Mór, "but look at *Oileán Thoraighe* (Tory Island)—there is their stronghold, and if our eyes could clearly pierce the ten miles from here to there, we should see the ruined house of Balor where their new King dwells. Ambitious villain! who can he be (I wonder) who thus has roused the beaten hosts to attack Eire again?"

Manus here drew forth my field-glasses.

"We *can* actually pierce that ten miles, Conall Mór," he said. He focussed the glasses; then handed them to the King.

The King looked. Then he cried: "What is this? What is this I see?"

"Yes, what is it?" asked Manus.

"I see their King coming forth from Balor's *lios*; I see his armies lift their spears to salute him . . . he walks towards the water . . . two servants support him, for he is

WHAT THE GLASSES REVEALED

lame and wounded . . . it is, *it is:* BALOR HIMSELF ! ! "

"What ! "

"'Tis Balor himself : who would not know that evil form from the stories? Balor the death-dealer : Balor whose deadly eye can slay man by its gaze even at a league's distance ! Balor is not dead : he has escaped from Moytura : he lives : he is back in Toraigh ! And O, Lugh, who alone could combat him, has gone to Tir na n-Og !

"Eire ! Eire ! thy sons of the Gael must stand to arms to-day. But alas for my beloved Tirchonaill that must bear the first brunt of the attack ! "

CHAPTER VI

TIDINGS ON THE WATERS

A Perilous Mission—Bad News in a Bottle—Lost Amid the Centuries!—Fenian Help.

MANUS took the glasses from Conall Mór, looked over the waters at Toraigh, then handed the glasses to me. Never have I seen a more horrible sight than that which I now saw. Balor, crippled and bandaged, hairy, ravenous, bestial, carrying a mighty sword, was making his way towards the water's edge, while his savage hosts tossed their spears in the air behind him, as in some gloating war-fury. Two or three rude boats floated at the land's edge: Balor seemed to be coming down to embark.

"That lad that escaped last night has got to Toraigh," said Manus, "and has told Balor of Lugh's re-appearance. That is what is

bringing the old villain himself ashore. That's my idea of it."

"Likely enough," said I, "and there should be stirring times when Balor leads the campaign."

"You may say that," put in Conall Mór, who now had the glasses; "and I see that Balor is entering his boat this minute. He will be ashore ere noon. His death-dealing eye is bandaged: but if he uncovers it in battle its withering gaze will destroy us. Our mortal arms cannot stand against him."

"Can we not make another effort to get a messenger through the mountains to the Ard-Rì?" asked Manus.

"Whom could we send?" asked Conall Mór. "Who is fleet enough to escape through the lines of the Fomorians?"

Manus meditated. "I just wish I had my bicycle here," said he, "till I would make a dash for it. . . . Whisht! the very thing! We'll get my cycle from Portabeg!"

"I do not follow you," said Conall Mór. "What is this *rothar* you speak of that it should enable a messenger to outstrip the Fomorians?"

"'Tis a kind of *gearrán iarainn*, or iron steed," said Manus, "and Bob here will seek it. He can take the boat and get down the river, through the Druid's Cave to the

Twentieth Century and Portabeg all in an hour or so, and be back here before Balor lands from Toraigh."

"Would it not be better," put in Colum, "for Cousin Robert to bring Topperley's motor-cycle and to make straight for the inland country on getting back up the river to the landing-place?"

"Just what I was going to say myself," said Manus loftily, and to me he added: "Will you do this, Bob?"

"Gladly," said I.

"That is a right gallant promise," said Conall Mór to me. "Speed through the mountains into the lands of Cineal Owen or Tyrone, where the High-King is at present a-coshering. Seek him out and tell him of our danger, so that he may come speedily with his hostings to guard Tirchonaill from the invader. We will hold the Dún as long as we can."

"I will make all speed," said I.

"Health and blessing with thee," said the King.

Manus and a gilly prepared to accompany me as far as the bog-edge, and I hastily refreshed myself before starting.

"Be as swift as ever you can, Bob," said Manus, "for I tell you our position is dangerous. And it's not the danger to our-

selves—for if all went to all, Colum and I could slip down the river to safety, but it would be terrible to see the Fomorians drive the Gaels from their stronghold in Tirchonaill. And another thing: between ourselves, Conall Mór has relics here in Dún-na-Gael that he is mighty chary of. Say, Colum, what do you call the thing the relics are in?"

"'Tis a Cathach," said Colum in his slow, serious style: "a battle-shrine that has in it the relics of Heremon, ancestor of the Gaels of all the North."

"That is interesting," said I: "have you seen the treasure?"

"We saw it as a great privilege on our first visit here," said Colum: "'tis a little wrought-metal casket with a manuscript in it written in some Eastern language. Cathba says it is very ancient Greek, and tells the story of the ancestors of Heremon himself—Miledh and Gaedal and the rest, when they met Moses in Egypt. . . . I need not tell you Conall Mór dreads its loss more than the loss of the Dún itself. If the Fomorians laid their hands on the sacred relics of the Gael, they would not spare them."

"So you see what hangs on your speed, Bob," said Manus.

We set out, Manus and the gilly and myself, and in a few minutes we were at the bog-edge.

Manus clasped my hand warmly and spoke with unusual warmth as he said: "*Slán leat agus go d-tigidh tú slán arìs.*"

Then he turned, and the gilly led him back through the maze of paths towards the Dún. It was with anxiety I saw him go.

I looked round me at the gloriously sunny scene, from the calm haze on the mountains over the green-waving land to the summer sea, and could hardly believe that I stood in the midst of ancient war: but the Dún, with the kerns and spearmen exercising in the open space around it, and with the Blue Flag of Ireland fluttering in the air, convinced me that all this had not been a dream.

I could see the glint of the river through the heathery slopes below me, and began to dash my way down the narrow path. I knew that Fomorians might be lurking in the heather, but that they would not face me: that was not the Fomorian way. They would strike me from behind if possible, but by a swift dash I hoped to get safely through.

And indeed, I was nearing the river when the first cry—a screeching shout—rose behind me, and an arrow whizzed into the heather near my feet.

I turned under a mighty rock—the very one on which Manus had stood the day before—and knew I was shielded from my pursuers,

who probably would hesitate before turning the corner, lest I should be lying there in ambush. Tiptoeing, I hastened on again, and got right to the river edge before the Fomorians re-appeared. This they did on the top of the rock, for they had evidently crept through the heather to surround the spot in which they thought I was lying in wait. I had *An Gruagach* pushed from its leafy hiding-place to the very water's brink when they saw me again.

Instantly a flight of arrows and hurled spears shot round me and past me, though, luckily, owing to the distance, I was not hit. I pushed the boat into the water, sprang in and sculled it with a single oar into mid-stream, as the shrieking Fomorians reached the bank. I let the boat be carried along by the force of the current and hid myself in the little cabin as spear after spear shot across the boat into the water beyond.

What if the enemy should swim after me and attack me in the boat itself? I asked. I loaded my revolver, and contemplated firing a single shot at the Fomorians, who were running along the bank, casting spear after spear. But I wished not to betray the secret of our firearms, so that when Manus and Colum should use their shot-guns for the first

BOB'S DASH TO PORTABEG

time the surprise would not be spoilt and the effect on the terrified Fomorians lessened.

And even while I meditated, I saw through the thick glass side of the little cabin that the figures of the savages were dwindling and growing hazy. Then they vanished! The swift, swirling current had carried me beyond their reach. With a few strokes of the oar, I entered once more the Druid's Cave and the Twentieth Century!

I sculled *An Gruagach* through the cave, then ran it ashore, for it seemed to me wiser to bring the motor-cycle from Portabeg by road than to attract public curiosity by taking it to the water of the harbour. I ran along the lonely road to Portabeg in less than half-an-hour. Then for the first time the question occurred to me: how should I explain our absence since the previous day and night?

I met Mr. O'Donnell on the road outside the village. "What, Bob!" said he: "back so soon? I thought you went boating with the *buachaillí* this morning."

This morning! What could he mean?

"It's barely an hour since you started," he went on, "so I suppose you haven't had time to run across that *Bull Dog* man? He disappeared just before you left."

"We—er—we came across him up at Cushandree . . ."

"Well, well, I'm sorry for you: he'll turn up for dinner this evening anyway."

And therewith my host passed on to his business, leaving me wondering. I could only assume that whatever time passed up the river, one always came out of the past at the same time that one went in—and this I afterwards learnt to be the case. *An Gruagach* had entered the Druid's Cave at one moment and come out of it the following instant, according to Twentieth Century time. It is clear that whatever time we passed in the early ages could not be taken from the time of the Twentieth Century: otherwise we should be living in two ages at once, which (in the poetic language of Euclid) would be absurd.

Meditating thus, I reached Portabeg. In a few minutes I had Topperley's motor-cycle ready and was speeding back to Cushandree. I shipped the cycle aboard *An Gruagach*, and rowed the boat to the mouth of the cave.

Just as I was bringing the boat through the rocky gate of the cave, I heard a jingling knock against its bows, and some floating object twice tinkled against its sides, while drifting astern. With great surprise, as I looked back, I saw that this object was a bottle —and moreover, a certain tightly-corked milk-bottle that my cousins had brought refreshment in on our expedition.

I remembered well unpacking this very bottle at Dún-na-Gael, so despite my state of urgency and excitement, I could not but wonder how it came to be floating now at Cushandree. I backed my oars, overtook the bottle, and brought it aboard. There was a folded slip of paper inside! It was surely a message from my friends. How lucky was the chance by which I noticed it.

I opened the bottle, and took out the paper —it was a sheet from Manus's notebook, and a message was written upon it in close lines of Irish. Here is a translation:

"*To Robert Mac Dara: Life and Health!*

"*Dún-na-Gael has fallen. We are retiring, and hope to break through the Fomorian lines into the mountains, where we shall defend ourselves in the glens. We shall draw the enemy after us into Gleann-na-Nimhe, the Poison Glen. Be swift, and bring the High-King's forces to attack them in the rear.*

"*The Sasanach, Horatio Topperley, disappeared from the Dún immediately after your departure. The Cathach disappeared with him!*

"*Win Victory and Blessing.*

"MANUS O DONNELL,
"*Captain.*"

Here was a fine state of affairs! I bent my back to the oars and pulled *An Gruagach* swiftly through the cave; then punted it through the rocky pass as rapidly as I could. As soon as the waters broadened into the lagoon, I took to pulling the oars again with energy. I left my revolver on the floor of the boat between my feet, ready to hand should the Fomorians appear.

But there was no sign of the enemy. I drew the boat inshore and beached it. I found I had landed at a somewhat different spot from that at which we had beached the boat before, but gave that matter no thought. I took the motor-cycle, mounted it, and drove up the slope of land over rocky paths, till I reached the summit of the lift from which we had previously seen Dún-na-Gael.

I expected to see Dún-na-Gael below me, as before, but burning, or smoking; and I expected, too, to be attacked by Fomorians at any moment, unless the strangeness of my motor-cycle should alarm them. But there was no smoke on the peaceful summer scene; there was no sign or sound of violence. Moreover, though I strained my eyes through the summer haze, I could see no trace of Dún-na-Gael at all yonder in the heart of the moor!

What had happened? Had I failed to reach the age in which I had left Manus and

Colum? Was I still in the Twentieth Century? Hardly the latter, for I could see no lime-washed cottages upon the heath or by the sea.

I rode swiftly for a few hundred yards, seeking a vantage point from which I would see the road to the mountain-pass. Again I halted—now on a little knoll crowned with fir trees, and searched the landscape. Then I heard the sound of running feet, and grasped my revolver in readiness for a Fomorian attack.

A white doe suddenly burst through the thicket, and in the fierce velocity of its flight drove against the trunk of one of the trees and fell dead. Its front was covered with the foam of flight, and exhaustion had evidently brought it to the end of its strength before that blind blow slew it.

Then three hounds shot through the brake, and ceased their pursuit in indecision, like waves rolled back from a rock.

"*Bran! Sceolan! Lomair!*"

These names were shouted in a thrilling voice, and the hounds obediently turned from their prey, as a mighty figure of a man came through the foliage, panting as after a long and eager flight. He was clad in saffron, and mighty limbs showed below his kilt and from his vest. A golden horn hung at his side, and a light spear was in his hand. His hair was

snow-white, and he had a short dark beard. His eyes were grey, searching, and unafraid.

Who was it? And where was I?

Not in the Twentieth Century, to be met by a chased deer and a running giant; nor yet in the age of Conall Mór.

The stranger looked at me between the two eyes. Then he spoke in clear and sweet Old Irish:

"Health to thee, friend. What strange adventure is afoot that this flying deer should bring me from the distant Shannon's side to meet you with yon strange instrument at this remote place? What is your name and what your clan?"

"My name is Riobárd and my sloinneadh is Clann Dara."

"And I," answered the stranger, "am called Fionn the son of Cual."

CHAPTER VII

AMBUSHED!

Fionn's Advice—I am Taken Prisoner—Among the Cannibals—Re-enter Topperley.

THE running giant who had met me was no other than the Captain of the Seven Fenian Battalions! So I had reached Tirchonaill two hundred years too late to be in Conall Mór's times. Anxiety tugged at my heart as I realised this. My cousins were cut off from me by the space of centuries—deep in the past they were fighting against the overwhelming savage hordes, hoping and waiting for the relief that I should bring, but could not.

I told Fionn M'Cuail all this, and he listened, sitting beside me on the grass, and watching me with grave, kindly eyes.

"I believe you, friend," he said, when I had finished, "though your story is a strange one.

A Druid told me of that same strange river, Awandree, and of how it ran through the Fourth Dimension, *an ceathrúa tómhas*, as he called it. I cannot remember his difficult explanation, but he said that Manannán Mac Lìr, or some Druid of old days, blasted the cave through the ages and let the river through . . . But these Druid secrets are not our concern. The question is, how came you to land in the wrong age and lose your friends?"

"Aye, and how can I get back there now?"

Fionn put his thumb to his mouth and considered. I remembered how, in the old stories, Fionn got wisdom from the thumb that had touched the Salmon of Knowledge. For several minutes he was silent, while I beat the earth with my restless hand, and stared over the wide scene that now was dull and wretched to my eyes. What—what—what should I do?

Then Fionn leapt to his feet.

"*Bran! Sceolan! Lomair!*" he cried, and the great hounds came bounding and fawning towards him. He clapped his hands in a strange way and made a scattering gesture, while he shouted: "Scatter ye, and gather the Fianna!" The hounds turned promptly, and shot into the heather, disappearing from sight.

"They will range Eire," said Fionn to me, "till they find Oisìn or Osgar or Caoilte Mac

Rónain, and they will bring the Fianna together in a day. But now, lead on to the place where you landed from Awandree."

I led Fionn down the rocky path to where I had beached *An Gruagach*, and he explained his plan to me as we walked swiftly on.

"This is what my Wisdom Thumb tells me," he said: "Awandree flows through Time, and the nearer it gets to the Druid's Cave, the nearer it is to the age you come from. Very well: you seem to have landed at the wrong place—at a place a little lower down the river than that at which you should have landed. That is, you landed at once lower down the river, and lower (so to speak) in history. You must sail *up* the river, and by landing at the usual place, you will also land at the right age. I will come up the river with you, and see you ashore, and you can ride to the Ard-Rì, if you think fit, and try to get help from him before I have the Fianna mustered."

"I will do that," said I.

"And I," said Fionn, "will bring the Fianna up the river as swiftly as may be."

Here we reached the river. We entered *An Gruagach*, and in a few minutes I had beached the boat at the place at which we had landed before. Fionn carefully noted the situation, saying he would swim back to where we had come from. But first he came with me to the

brim of land from which Dún-na-Gael could be seen. I took the motor-cycle with me, of course.

Terrible was the sight before us. It was now turning towards evening, and long shadows lay across the land. And something dark like a shadow, but sadder, streaked the western sky—a long, sullen drift of smoke. It came from the embers of the raths of Dún-na-Gael. No more did Conall Mór's Mead Hall tower proudly beyond the fortress walls; no longer did the Sunburst wave above a Gaelic stronghold. Other little wisps of smoke, here and there over the scene, showed where the farmers' bothies had been likewise fired in the savage wrath of the Fomorian invaders. I looked at Fionn and saw that tears stood in his eyes.

Fionn turned, shook me by the hand, and bade me farewell. I ran my cycle a few yards, until the engine was properly working, then leapt into the seat, and sped eastwards.

But the road was bad and often no more than a foot-track, and I could not travel as speedily as I would wish. Often I had to stop and search for my direction. Once, as I stopped, I fancied I heard the noise of firing from the direction of the hills. But all this time I had seen no Fomorians, so that I

supposed the whole tribe of them was engaged in the fighting in the glens.

I was now travelling slowly through a kind of moor, with big clumps of whins hiding my view, so that I was uncertain of my direction. And just as I was thinking of my good luck in avoiding the enemy, a Fomorian stepped out of the heather and stood before me on the moor some twenty yards away, menacing me with a spear.

Now, in this plight, the wisest thing for me to do, you would think, would be to stop, draw my revolver, and shoot before the spear should be cast. But I was too confused by the urgency of my position to think clearly, and what should I do but act mechanically, putting my hand to the motor horn as I would on ordinary occasions.

"*Too-toot-t-t-blare-r-r-r-r!!*"

Topperley, true to the national instinct, had chosen a very noisy instrument, and the *blare* of the horn was like the roar of the Brown Bull of Cooley. When he heard it, the Fomorian was so overcome with alarm, that he tumbled before me head over heels, and I rode past in safety before he could collect himself! A silly act had proved to be the wisest!

I tried now to hasten my speed, but found the moor so perplexing that after many twists

and turns to avoid big bushes of whins, I was uncertain as to whether I was still travelling east. Then, to my amazement, I found myself riding into a clearing that I had passed some time before: I was travelling in a circle!

Bang!—jar!—and a screech! I lay sprawling on the stones, entangled with the machine. A well-aimed spear had burst my back tyre from behind and overthrown the cycle.

Before I could free myself, rough, brutal hands were upon me, and I found myself the prisoner of several Fomorians, who fastened my hands behind me, and began to march me through the moor. One of them carried the motor-cycle as if it were a wisp of straw—so powerful these savage creatures were. I guessed what had happened—my motor horn had alarmed and roused some camp of the enemy, and scattering through the whins, they had learnt of my passing from their startled sentry. By losing my way, I had turned back into their reach, and they had succeeded in ambushing me.

What would my fate be now? And even should I escape from the Fomorians in this extremity, how should I escape the terrible consciousness that I had failed in my mission to bring relief to the forces of Conall Mór?

CHAPTER VIII

TOPPERLEY REX

Re-enter Topperley—The Conquering Briton—Another Royal Banquet—Balor's Prison-House—Topperley's Tale.

My captors led me rapidly through the whins to their camp. They seemed to tell their chief what had happened, speaking in an unmusical jargon that I could make nothing of. When he had given an order, one of the hairy giants heaved me on to his shoulder and began to run with me down towards the beach, accompanied by two others.

At the beach—I recognised Maheraroarty by the big sweep of sand that curves into the sea like a sickle—I was placed in a little hide-covered boat. One of my captors sat beside me with his talon-hand on my shoulder: the other two paddled the boat over the tide till it

was clear of the rocks—then set up a rude sail, and we began to draw over the waves towards Tory Island.

Why was I being taken to the Fomorian stronghold?—to the dwelling-place of Balor of the Blows? Terrible memories flashed through my mind: tales of human sacrifice at Tory Island's Maledictive Stone, and of Balor's Cannibalism.

When the boat drew near the island, I saw Balor's dwelling above us—a clumsy but tremendous wall of giant stones piled into the crevices of the Tower Rocks. Smaller raths and stone-and-mud cabins clustered round its foot, like a little village. A few Fomorian figures passed up and down between the beach and this little cluster; they were carrying plunder from a newly-landed boat.

But what was my surprise, as our boat grounded on the shingle, and my guards dragged me ashore, to hear a chorus of voices sound from above us, singing in the English tongue!

Yes, from a mud building next to Balor's stronghold, the words of a song floated on the air. In the wavering, awkward tune I could detect a faint resemblance to the "*Old Hundredth*," and from the broken English I could almost piece together the words.

Then Topperley's voice rang out!

"Nah then!—that ain't good enough. Try again. All tergether nah!"

And the chorus boomed out in broken imitation of Topperley's language:

I thank the goodness an' the grice
That on my birth 'as smiled . . .
An' made me in this ya-appy plice
A yappy English child!

Then Topperley's voice rang out again:

"That's better. And arfter the 'ymn we'll 'ave dinner. Cook!—*Polly voo Fransey?*—See the dinner's served better terday. Orl come back 'ere this evening for service at six-thirty, follered by instruction in fish-curing fer the forrin markit."

My guards had now brought me to the door of the mud building, and Topperley appeared before me.

Topperley was coming through the door of the stone hut. He looked more prosperous and blatantly self-content than usual even, and a fantastic crown was set upon his head, contrasting queerly with his sports costume. He lifted his crown to me with the involuntary motion of raising his hat—then recalled himself and scratched his head as if he had lifted the crown for that purpose only.

"Well, young-feller-me-lad," said he, "so 'ere we are again!—an' w'ere did *you* spring from?"

RE-ENTER TOPPERLEY

The two Fomorians who had taken me captive seemed amazed at Topperley's appearance and at his cool manner. They hesitated and exchanged sentences in their cackling gibberish—but still kept hold of me. Some of their kindred appeared behind Topperley and bowed to him awkwardly as they came forward. He pointed to my captors as you would to sheep that you were setting a dog after. "*At 'em!*" said he.

His servants—for so they seemed—ran at my captors and tore them away from me. Then they dragged the two towards Topperley, and forced them to a clumsy obeisance.

"On the knee, you dogs!" said Topperley; and when the Fomorians had bent to his feet, he patted their woolly heads and said: "That's the style, my buckos." He signed to his followers, who took the two away with them.

"Nah just you come along o' me," he said to myself, taking me by the arm.

I shook myself free. "No," said I. "I don't know what tomfoolery you are going on with here, but I want to go straight back to the mainland and go on with my errand."

"Don't be so 'asty," said Topperley. "'Ow are you going ter get ter the mainland ternight with that storm coming up from the west?"

I looked to the west. The horizon was already blackened out, and angry white lines

foamed on the dark distant waters. Soon the sky would be overcast, and the tempest burst. Even in the calmest weather, sudden storms like this are common on the Atlantic coast, and I knew that the ten miles to the mainland would soon be impassable—especially in the Fomorian cockle-shell boats. Fate seemed unrelentingly set against me! Here had I recovered my liberty only to be stranded on an island and divided from my friends by ten miles of raging water.

"Think yerself lucky I didn't let yer be thrown into old Balor's prison," said Topperley. "There's more than one in there already 'as 'ud be mighty glad of your charnces. Not that you treated me too well w'en you was on top, an' I tell yer if you was that brat of a cousin of yours as led me such a darnce, I'd let yer go through it, so I would. But wot I say is, let byegornes be byegornes. An' anyway, I ain't sorry to 'ave someone 'ere to talk some English with—even if it's only an Irishman wot 'as a brogue an' carn't talk English properly. Come along with me nah an' 'ave dinner."

Stranded as I was, I judged it best to go with Topperley, so I entered Balor's barbaric stone hall with him. I was eager, too, to find out what he was doing at Balor's stronghold, how he had secured such ascendancy over the

Fomorians, and what his plans were. Further, it occurred to me that where Topperley was, there the stolen *Cathach* might also be, and I hoped to find a clue to its whereabouts.

Balor's hall was but a sort of natural chamber in the mighty rocks—a kind of giant cave—the natural features of which had been supplemented by the piling of great boulders into the form of a wall on the fourth side, with a space between two inclining stones for a doorway, and several huge rocks leaning together for a roof. Light—and great draughts—came through the many gaps.

In the centre of this barbaric chamber, there stood a handsome table of fantastic workmanship—its surface glittered in squares of gold and silver. I recognised Conall Mór's chess-table, doubtless newly plundered. Topperley settled into a large chair before it—I recognised the very chair that Conall Mór had sat in when he received us at Dún-na-Gael.

"No bloomin' picnic style *'ere*," said Topperley. "Just you 'elp yourself to a seat. Sorry there ain't another chair like this, but you can make do on a bench. Then I'll show you wot a proper dinner's like, an' you can compare it with that amateur spread we 'ad at ole King Collywobble's."

A young Fomorian, with a piece of plundered cloth tied about him like an apron,

was waiting at Topperley's elbow, bowing and ducking every minute.

"Off with you, waiter," said Topperley, "and bring in the first course."

"Um? Glp? Flp?"

The Fomorian made several gulping sounds as if asking what his master meant.

"*Polly voo Fransey?*" asked Topperley, pointing to the door. "Soup—*soup*—SOUP!"

The Fomorian wagged his head, and trotted away like a dog running for his master's stick. Then he returned with a big steaming iron bowl.

"Ox-tile soup," Topperley explained to me.

He handed me a big sea-shell to use as a spoon, and he began with another shell to help himself to the soup at splashing speed.

"Good stuff this, eh, wot?" he asked, before I could get a secure hold of my shell to start.

Even in my present plight I could not forbear a touch of sarcasm:

"It *sounds* good enough," said I.

"The next item on the *meenoo*," said Topperley, finishing the soup before I had more than tasted it, "is broiled 'addick."

The haddock came, and then Topperley rose from his seat. "Excuse me," said he, "but this 'ere's a matter I 'ave ter attend ter meself—the roast beef of old England. If I don't see to it, that there cook'll make a 'ash

of the job. I've been trying ter teach 'im 'ow ter cook beef fer the parst week, an' we've used up two bloomin' cahs in the experiments, but 'e ain't got the trick yet. I'll be back in a minute."

Topperley felt in his pocket for his cookery-book, and left the hall, the Fomorians at the door bowing to the ground as he passed.

I waited, and meanwhile wondered what Topperley meant by saying he had been teaching the cook for a week—indicating that he had been here for at least that time, when according to my reckoning he had only left Dún-na-Gael that morning. The only explanation I could think of was, that on coming up the River of Time with Fionn M'Cuail I had landed just a yard or a foot lower than I should have, this allowing for a week or more in point of time. Clearly I should have landed at the same point to an inch.

While I was thinking this, and resolving to ask Topperley on his return exactly how long it was since he had left the Dún, my eyes wandered round the hall. At the far end, where the floor dipped down as to the extremity of the cave, there were two or three great boulders piled, and I fancied that they seemed to be stopping an open place. Dark crevices between them suggested a second or

"I SAW A PAIR OF HUMAN EYES"

smaller cave within, and I watched the crevices with some curiosity.

Then, just at the juncture of the stones by the ground, in a little dark hole that a rat might run through, *I saw a pair of human eyes!* As my glance fell upon them, they dropped furtively away.

Whose could the eyes be? Not a Fomorian's, for the Fomorian race was invariably one-eyed. Some prisoner was there immured, surely—closed in by the huge stones that only a giant could move. Doubtless the cannibal Balor's prison-house was there—a rocky cavern under this his banqueting-hall.

Topperley returned. He was followed by his apron'd Fomorian waiter, who bore a mighty roasted joint. Topperley had taken off his crown and hung it on his left arm while he mopped his face.

"Bless me," said he, "that bloomin' rapscallion was roastin' the joint withaht basting it, if you'll believe me. It'll come to this, that I'll 'ave to live in the kitchen orl day to keep me eyes on the cookin'. An' that'll be a queer plice fer a King ter live."

"King?"

"Yes, young feller-me-lad, I'm King 'ere nah—Topperley Parsha, so ter speak—I've sacrificed myself in the caurse of Civilisation, an' taken it on me to bring these poor

benighted creatures to a sense of wot's wot. An' nah let's cut the cackle an' get ter the beef."

He took up a finely-tempered Gaelic sword that had been broken to the shortness of a carving-knife, and with it began to cut up the joint, talking the while:

"Good succulent meat this; killed just three days ago. Beef should always be killed three days, an' I 'ave a cah killed each day fer the third day's eating. Nah, *mutton* ort only to be killed two days. Remember that if you're ever setting up 'ahse-keeping."

When he had finished the carving, he refused to talk until the meal should be finished.

"Carn't talk and eat tergether an' do both properly," he said. "Wait till we've finished eatin' an' I've 'ad my forty winks ter let the gastric juices get ter work."

We finished the meal without conversation, and then Topperley sighed contentedly.

"Wodjer say ter that?" he asked. "Wasn't that a better turn-aht than you got at ole Collywobble's plice? No sprorling abaht on sofers 'ere w'ile you eat, an' no bloomin' fiddlers kickin' up a 'ullaballoo. W'y, they wouldn't do yer much better than this at Frascati's. Bless me if that dream of mine didn't come true arfter orl."

"Well now, Mr. Topperley," I began——

"Topperley *Parsher*, please."

"Topperley Pasha, then," said I, "will you not explain to me now what is the meaning of all this? How long is it since you left *Dún-na-Gael?* Where is Balor? Have you any word of *my friends*, *Conall Mór*, and the others?"

I purposely said nothing about the prisoner whose eyes I had seen in the dark crevice, but I spoke out the words "*Dún-na-Gael*" and "*my friends*, *Conall Mór*," loudly, so that the prisoner below, if he should be a Gael, would know that I was his friend.

"Well, I'll tell yer, an' be quick abaht it, becorse I want my after-dinner nap. Wot 'appened was this: W'en I woke up in the old shanty at Doony-woony-wot's-its-nime, I found you'd orl done a bunk—skedaddled. So I got up and went rarnd looking for a bite.

"But I couldn't find anyone as could understand me. The men was orl polishing up their spears. I went rummaging rarnd in the dining 'orl then, an' I come upon a flarsk or two of that trickly drink and few odds-an'-ends, an' wot I took to be a fancy biscuit-tin. I slung orl these on me back, and tried ter do a dart aht of the plice ter get clear of the 'ole show. I wanted ter get 'awai dahn upon the Swanee River' to the old folks at 'ome, so ter speak,

but I 'adn't no luck. I found my way through the bog orl right, for the parth went quite straight, but there must be two or three parths aht in different directions. Anyway, I come out on the wrong side from the river."

Here I interrupted the Pasha, for a startling suspicion had suggested itself to me. "*What became of the fancy biscuit-tin?*" I asked.

"Just you wait till I come to that," said Topperley. "That bloomin' biscuit-tin was a cod. It was as 'eavy as the jooce, and 'adn't a biscuit in it at orl."

I guessed at this that the box Topperley had taken away for a fancy biscuit-tin was nothing other than Conall Mór's treasured *Cathach*, and I made a mental note to inquire further about it. Later, I came upon it, cast away in a corner of the cavern, and bore it with me in my subsequent adventures.

"Well, I 'unted rarnd," Topperley proceeded, "an' tried ter get ter the off-side of the bog, so as to get at the river. Then I see worter below me. I got dahn to the river and 'unted for the boat. But wot I found was a rickety old craft mide of skins—belonging to these one-eyed blokes I suppose. 'Owever, I got in an' paddled it dahn the stream.

"Only, wot do yer think, but I didn't come aht at that cave plice at all! I'd gorn on the wrong river, an' it flowed dahn to a sort of

estuary, w'ere there was a lot more boats coming in from the sea. I was in the middle of a fair camp o' these fellers. Well, they took me prisoner—seems as if arrests was all the fashion in Ireland: you never know when you ain't going to be took up by someone or other—and a big old lad that they called Balor, a feller with a bandage over 'is optic, that 'ad just landed, 'e ordered me into one of the boats that was sailing away with the swag. Two of the one-eyed jokers come along with me, same as with you.

"'Course I was feelin' a bit dahn-in-the-mahth about being took prisoner again, but I tell you we Britons aren't diddled so easy as all that. So first I tries to come the *suaviter modo* with the hairy fellers. I appealed to their better nature, and arsked 'em w'ere they thought they'd go to w'en they died for treating me like that. They shook their wigs and let on they didn't understand.

"Then I told 'em that they couldn't treat a British citizen like that with impunity. (They didn't give me a bite to eat orl this w'ile.) I said I'd 'ave an inquiry made, and a gunboat sent to rescue me. That didn't 'ave no effect.

"I warned 'em of the submarines then, and said they'd get torpedoed if they didn't go back to land. But it was orl no good. They

just wagged their wigs and let on they didn't understand.

"Even then, I wasn't at my wits' ends. We Britons know a trick or two worth two of any wig-wagging, an' I fell back on the method that was never known ter file—the good ole Colonial wheeze. This was 'ow I went to work——"

CHAPTER IX

COLUM'S DIARY OF THE RETREAT

[*Before proceeding further with Topperley's narrative, I think it well to insert some pages from Colum's diary, written while he was with the Gaelic army, so that the reader may learn how it fared with my friends while I was in Tory Island.*]

First Day.—Cousin Robert left for Portabeg in the early morning, and just after his departure we found that Topperley had disappeared along with the sacred *Cathach*, or casket of relics. Scouring parties were sent out, but failed to overtake him.

About mid-day, an attack by the Fomorians in force dispersed several of our parties towards the North, and the passages through the bog were captured at that side. News came through that Balor was destroying all before him.

Conall Mór called a council of war, which Manus and myself were allowed to attend.

While we were seated in discussion, news came that the water supply within the Dún had dried up suddenly and the Moat had drained.

"How do you account for that?" asked Conall Mór of Ugaine, his war captain, who was in charge of affairs since war broke out.

"I can make no explanation," said Ugaine, "for the springs have never before failed to give water. But this I know, that without flowing springs we cannot hold out in the Dún for a week."

"And relief is hardly likely to reach us in that short space," quoth Conall Mór, "despite the valiance and expedition of our friend, Riobárd Mac Dara, with his wondrous wheel-steed from Portabeg."

"My own humble opinion," put in Cathba, Conall's druid, "is that Balor has dried up our springs by blasting the limestone rocks through which they percolate on the hilly slope beyond the bog . . ."

"His eye would blast anything," put in the King's bard.

"It is well known by the Druids," continued Cathba, "according to the laws of the science of *Céidheólas*, or as our friends of the Eastern world would say, of *Geology*, that the internal

percolations of the earth are of so delicate a . . . "

"We will take your word for it, Cathba," interrupted the King.

"If you would allow me a horn of ink and a scrap of parchment," went on Cathba, "I could make this very interesting subject perfectly clear with a simple diagram. My friend Feichertne, the Ard-Druid of Midhe, has already composed a poem on the subject, setting forth the salient features of the problem in verse of admirable melody and metrical exactitude. Allow me to recite a couple of cantos . . ."

"Another time, Cathba," said the King. "We will accept your word that Balor of the Blasting Eye is responsible for the drying up of our water. Now, if the enemy confine us within the walls of the Dún, and if there is no rain, we shall be defeated for want of water. Is not that the case, Ugaine, as I understand you?"

"*Go dìreach*," said Ugaine. "The Dún is indestructible by men, but it cannot protect us from the wiles of that more-than-man, that offspring of the Powers of Evil. My counsel is, that we fight our way, this night, through to the hills, and endeavour to maintain ourselves there among the passes till help comes."

The King stood. "Friends," he said, "you

have heard our wise war leader's advice. It is one that involves the leaving of the Dún and therefore requires the consent of all. Are you agreed that this is the wise course?"

Words of assent ran round the board. I saw the King's eyes wet.

"It grieves me," he said, "to leave the Dún, but I am of the one mind of the Council. Ugaine, give your orders to the clan for instant preparation. The Council is ended."

Later.—The clan was completely prepared for departure soon after noon, each man with his essential needs tied on his back. The old men, the farmers who had come into the Dún from the outlying farms—now all blazing and smoking the sky all round—together with the children, formed the centre of the drawn-up host. Heavy-armed clansmen and kerns guarded the front and rear. The King marched among the foreguard—by his own choice a soldier among the rest—for Ugaine now held command, and Conall Mór's authority was suspended. There is something Republican about the King, and something kingly about the Republic here in Tirchonaill of the ancient days.

By special request, Manus and I were allowed to march in the foreguard. Manus saw me writing up this diary in a pause on the march.

"Writing communiqués, are you?" he asked. "I suppose you are saying that we are *retiring - in - good - order - to - take - up - a more - advantageous - position - in - the - rear.*"

"No," said I. "After all, *we are not exactly running away.*"

Cathba overheard us, but as we were speaking in the Béarla he did not see the point.

"Are you sending a message to your comrade?" he asked.

"You mean Cousin Robert? No; how could I?"

"Put one in a bottle, and send it down the Druid's River," said he.

"A great idea!" quoth Manus, and seizing my writing pad, he wrote a message to Robert and placed it in a bottle.

We marched along the path through the bog that we had entered by. This was on the south side, and we hoped that the Fomorians had not yet surrounded this side in force. Right enough, we got right clear of the bog before catching any sight of the enemy. Then, as we climbed the little slope, and looked back over the bog, we saw a wisp of smoke rise from the heart of the Dún! The horrid shouting of the savage hosts soon was wafted faintly on the evening air—the cries of rage when they found that we had got away from them. We saw, too, little black figures scurry-

ing to and fro over the wall of the Dún like ants on an ant-hill—the Fomorians carrying plunder from the raths before the swiftly gathering flames should destroy all.

Ugaine sent a message to the rear ordering a small body of men, who would volunteer for the dangerous task, to hold the narrow road from the Dún as long as they could against any Fomorians who should follow us the way we had come. He asked for seven men, but nearer seventy offered themselves—that is, all the fighting men we had. Finally, seven young men who had distinguished themselves at hurling begged Conall Mór to be allowed the honour as their prize, and Ugaine acceded to Conall Mór's request on their behalf.

This decision only took a few moments, and the march was continued at full haste.

When we came in sight of the river, our leading scout noted a number of arrows sticking in the ground here and there as though there had been a conflict.

Manus looked at me gravely. "*Bob came this way*," he said.

We hoped Robert had got safely through, and when we saw no traces of the boat lower down where we had beached it, we supposed, with relief, that he had got away without being captured.

Ugaine sent half-a-dozen men ahead to cross the ford and make sure that none of the Fomorians who had attacked Robert were lurking in hiding in the heather. Conall Mór insisted on being allowed to go as one of them, and Manus claimed the right to go as he wanted to throw his bottle-message to Cousin Robert into the river.

They went ahead then. From the slope above, I watched, standing beside Ugaine. Suddenly, at the very water's edge, we saw Conall Mór reel, and disappear!

"An arrow!" said Ugaine, with terrible anguish in his voice. "O, mad was I to allow the King to go!"

The yells with which the Fomorians always fight tore the air, and a dozen ran from hiding as if to pick up the fallen man.

"*Bang!*"

The foremost fell, turning a complete somersault and tumbling into the river. Manus had fired with his shot-gun just in time. The fellows of the fallen leader stopped as if they, too, had been shot, and turning, ran in panic, while from either side of the river shouts of fear rang out, and terror-wild Fomorians left hiding to run in all directions away from the ford. Scores and scores of them ran, while a dozen young Gaelic kerns pursued them, bringing down one after another with

arrow and well-hurled spear before Ugaine blew the horn of recall.

Conall Mór lay on the stony shelf beside the water, an arrow in the calf of his left leg. Cathba fell on his knees, and moaning as though he himself were the wounded man, picked out the missile with delicate fingers, and then sucked the poison from the wound.

"The King will recover," said the Physician of the Clan, when brought from some rear-part of the marching body. "You have saved his life by your swift action, Cathba."

The King weakly lifted his hand and patted Cathba's tear-stained face above him.

"You were brave—brave . . . and good, dear Cathba," he said, and then sank into deepest slumber.

"No," said Cathba to us beside him, "it needed no courage to suck the poison. An elementary knowledge of the science of *luibheólas*, or as the Greeks say, Pharmacopœia, would make it clear that . . ."

"Form up!" said Ugaine, and Cathba's medical lecture was cut short.

The King was lifted on a kind of stretcher by the willing arms of strong young men, and we crossed the ford, wading knee deep.

"We must be cautious," said Ugaine to me. "That ford was well guarded with strong reinforcements, and but for that thunder-

weapon scaring the Fomorians, we might have found it hard to dislodge them. It showed good generalship to garrison the ford with an ambushed force. The thunder-weapon may not scare the enemy so easily a second time, and if the same generalship has garrisoned other points, we may find it hard to get through to the hills.

Forthwith, he strengthened the scouting force ahead, and bade the march be quickened.

We hurried on, then, through heather and wild, and through forest land too, till the sun had set. We took a short rest and a hasty meal, halting at an incline from which we could see before us the single gap in the mountains that we must pass through before being clear of the flat country.

"If once we can get through there," said Ugaine to me, "it will be hard for pursuers to trace us among the mountain passes, and easy for us to hold the passes and narrow places and to fortify ourselves in caves. We ought to be able to hold out in the mountains for many weeks."

Just then, one of our scouts came hurrying towards us, running along the edge of what is now called Dunlewy Lake.

"The news?" asked Ugaine. "Is the gap clear?"

"There is a strong body of Fomorians

encamped at the very mouth of the gap," said the scout. "They did not observe me spying upon them, and are not yet aware of our approach."

"How many are there?"

"Two hundred at least, and they are strongly encamped among great boulders. They completely block the way into the mountains."

CHAPTER X

"STITESMANSHIP"

Topperley's Tale Continued—Colonial Methods—Sedition—The Natives in Trouble—A Voice from Prison.

I WILL now resume my account of my interview with Topperley. He was telling me of his plight when captured by the Fomorians.

"Yus," he went on, "trust a Briton to git rarnd a pair of unedyercated barbarians. I put my 'and to my 'ip pocket and brort aht my flarsk of John Jameson. Lucky these 'ere licker restrictions 'adn't stopped the sale before I got my supply, eh?

"Well, I poured aht a drop into the little tin cup under the flarsk and drank it and smacked my lips, and then I 'anded the bottle to the hairy feller sitting nearest to me. 'Spose 'e 'adn't seen the likes of John Jameson before, but you orter see 'im sniffing when I 'ad my drop. W'en 'e got the bottle to 'is mug, I

'ad to pull it orf 'im, 'e was that took with it.

"Arfter that, the other boyo, 'e wanted a drop, and took a pull at the bottle, and then the first, 'e snatched the bottle and 'ad another drop, and in 'arf a jiffey the bottle was going backards and forrards like the piston of a steam-engine. I was fair shocked, and told 'em they orter be ashimed of themselves—told 'em I'd get Gipsy Smith to come and lecture them on temperance, and told 'em not 'ter look upon the wine when it was red. 'Wine is a mocker,' says I, very solemn.

"They didn't pay much 'eed to my little sermon, but that didn't matter to me, because they were getting nasty with each other, and I 'ad it my own way with the boat. We were near the island, so I thought I'd go ashore and look fer a bite to eat instead of waiting till I could make the long journey back 'ter the mineland. So I steered the boat ashore and pushed the two boyos out just as one of them was lamming at the other with 'is fist, only 'e 'it too 'igh. They began banging away, but neither of 'em could see straight enough to get a blow 'ome.

"Then three or four more blacky-tops comes dahn the 'ill to the beach and was making like to arrest me again. I was getting fair fed-up with arrests by that time, I can tell

TOPPERLEY'S RUSE

you. Felt more like a bloomin' Syn Feener than a Briton. But before these jokers could lay their pors *(paws)* on me my two buckoes stopped their little scrap, and went for the new fellers tergether. *They weren't going ter lose the man with the bottle,* you bet.

"I 'ad ter step in arfter a w'ile to restore order. I made another little sermon to 'em:

> Little birds in their nests agree (says I),
> It is a pretty sight,
> But 'ow deplorable it is ter see
> Fomorians forl aht and fight.

And the end of it was, that arfter I'd given a drop to each of the new fellers, I 'ad the 'ole six of 'em follering me up the 'ill like a body-guard—same as chickens follering the party with the grub. 'Come on,' says I, 'be'ave yerselves, and yer'll orl get another drop.' That's wot I call stitesmanship. That's the way ole Asquith snookered you Irish by promising yer 'Ome Rule like me with the bottle.

"W'en I got up to that ole one-eyed josser's 'ouse—w'at's that 'is nime was?—Balfour or Baller or something—I found quite a lot of the woolly-nappers; but my six, with the fighting John Jameson in 'em, was fit fer the lot, and arfter they'd 'ad a general scrap among 'emselves, I steps in again to restore order. 'You fellers,' says I, 'is always fighting

among yourselves. You ain't fit to be left alone. If you don't 'ave somebody ter rule yer and look arfter yer, yer'll orl be dead before the next General Election. I'm the friend of Small Nationalities, I am,' says I, 'and my 'eart bleeds to see 'ow you've suffered under that ole Kaiser Balfour. So I'm going ter interdooce English institootions,' says I. 'The first of these is——'

"It was 'ere that one of the woolly-tops made a grab at the John Jameson bottle in my 'ip-pocket, but a big feller at the other side 'it 'im one with a stone club, and orl was quiet again.

"'That's right,' says I to the big feller. 'Law and order is essential,' says I, 'to good government,' and I gave 'im an extra sup fer 'imself.

"'The *second* of the institootions of civilisation,' says I, 'will be Revival Meetings—strictly non-denominational of course—and the Missionary, that's myself, will give you lessons arfterwards in some useful and honest employment w'ich I 'ope you will earnestly apply yerselves to as a slight reward for orl the benefits 'e's conferring on yer. As soon as you are sufficiently advarnced in the English langwidge—the langwidge of Shikespere and myself, 'Oratio Topperley—the melojus tongue of 'Eaven and 'Ampstead 'Eath—

Bible-lessons will be given, strictly non-denominational too, and the *Bull-Dog* will be put on sale (ninepence a dozen of thirteen copies, no returns, try ahr football competitions and get a moter-car fer a sixpenny postal order).'

"Well, I needn't say they didn't understand orl this, not 'aving 'ad the advanterges of the magnificent free edyercation that is enjoyed in England and made me the man I am. But I tell yer, we Britons ain't goin' ter stoop ter learn the lingoes o' the lands we civilize (nice little job it would be, wouldn't it?) but ahr principles is to talk English at the pore benighted savidges 'oo speak other tongues all day and night till they *'ave* to learn the langwidge or go under. And you'd be surprised 'ow easily they pick it up w'en they 'ave ter arsk in English every time they want a drop to wet their w'istles, and the Bible-teaching 'elps, besides" (Topperley added as an afterthought)—"besides improving their minds and orl that.

"Yus, torking of this 'ere langwidge question, you'd wonder if you saw 'ow quickly them hairy fellers cotton on to it in them Revival Meetings. I think you 'eard them singing '*I thank the goodness and the grice*' w'en you was coming 'ere. That's wot I call

the Phrase Method. I tort 'em a few patriotic songs too. Listen!——"

Topperley stopped, and from the windy beach where the Fomorians were labouring at some task for their new lord, there came the chorus of a song learned by rote:

> Rule Britanyer, Britanyer rules the wives,
> And Britons never, never, NEVER
> Shall—be—slives.

Topperley shook his head sadly. "*Lucky them buckoes don't know abaht the submarines*," said he. "I tried to teach 'em an Irish song or two into 'ther bargain," he went on. "There was '*A Little Bit of 'Eaving*' and '*Wodjer think of the Irish nah?*' Nothing like doing wot yer can ter stimmilate local patriotism, orlways subjeck to the 'igher patriotism of Imperial sentiment, as my friend Birrell said before 'e got slung aht of 'is job fer letting the local patriotism get too 'igh-'anded.

"Well, ter mike a long story short withaht any more instalments, I've got these pore fellers well on the road ter enlightenment and prosperity. They works 'ard, and w'en the John Jameson run aht I was lucky to find some bottles of that strong treacly stuff that was brort as plunder from the Dooney-wooney plice, and I took control of that, and serves it aht to 'em in small doses fer pay every day. The

way I got the keeping of it was, I let one party 'ave the cellar one day, but 'e got screwed and didn't give the others their share. Then they kicked him aht and put another in 'is plice, and the same thing 'appened. So I pointed aht to 'em that to prevent disputes they should let an aht-sider 'ave the dealing-aht of the stuff.

"'Far be it from me to direct your chice,' says I, 'fer the Island of Tory (despite its nime) is demercratically governed ever since it came under the Union Jack,' says I; 'but I urge upon you, genelmen,' says I, 'ter seleck some individyual that 'as no part in your politics and can afford to be impartial,' says I; 'in fact,' says I, 'I suggest you elect some genelman,' says I, 'some candidate,' says I, 'of liberal and enlightened opinions from ahtside the constitooency,' says I. 'And in thus advising you, genelmen,' says I, 'believe me that I am actuated by no motives but the desire to see you arrive at the wisest chice,' says I.

"Of course, I was the only outsider among 'em, so they agreed ter give me the job, and I was glad they gave it willingly. That's the advantage of ruling people demercratically, sonny—you can always 'old it up to 'em that they 'ad their way in electing yer, and you can do fair anything you want to, then, for if they

call the man they elected fool, they're calling themselves bigger fools for electing 'im, and they won't do that in a 'urry. Give people free institootions, sonny, and you can 'ave yer own way in governing them—fer their own good, of course—but mind and always get a 'old of the pay-box and the liquor. That's more stitesmanship. That's wot gave the *Bull Dog* its ten million circulation. That's wot made our Empire wot it is.

"Well, I keeps 'em quiet by making 'em believe they're governing 'emselves, and if any party ever gets obstroperous, I threatens to resign and let their enemies into power, or I works up a quarrel about the beer and sets 'em fighting, and then lectures 'em at the Revival Meetings. The only trouble I 'ave is, that some of 'em 'ave took it into their 'eads to start a new seck, something like the Salvation Army, and they 'old street-corner meetings at the same time as my meeting. They conduck their services orl in their own langwidge, just as if they was some sort of Syn Feeners, so I carn't mike aht wot it is they ain't content abaht. They 'ad a fight with my buckoes the other night, and I 'aven't 'eard yet 'ow many was killed on each side. Freethought 'as its disadvantages, yer see. Orl the sime, the island will be easier to rule *w'en there's fewer nitives.* In fack, I'm thinking

of opening an emigration bureau when things is a bit more advanced. Twenty-five per cent. on the fares will be my commission.

"Take a note of all that, young feller-me-lad, and consider w'ether you'd take a job in the Tory Civil Service—b'lieve you said you 'ad a University edyercation?—you'd be quite suiterble fer the work if yer paid attention to my methods. I tell yer, there's 'igh scope fer development. Tike the fish tride alone. Soon as I can find my way through that there Druid's Cave again, I'm going ter send loads and loads of fish up there fer Billingsgate—a trawler will corl and pick 'em up—and the cheap labour in fishing and curing 'ere at the island will mean twenty-five per cent. profit all along the line. The work'll keep these hairy fellers aht of mischief, so it will be a benefit to them, and the profits I make will be well earned, see?

"Then look at the reciprocal tride, as we say in the papers. These fellers don't look 'arf respectable in their wolf-skin togs. Next meeting, I'm going ter lecture 'em on that subjeck, and make 'em want ter get proper duds like you and me wears. Then I shall arrange with a 'olesile dripery (Topperley meant *wholesale drapery*) business in England ter send over ready-mide suits—fairly perishable stuff, so as to allow frequent changes and

variety, and I reckon I'll get abaht thirty per cent. commission on orl sales. Besides that, I'll open a subscription in the *Bull Dog* fer the pore 'eathens, and, of course, *I'll* look after the proper spending of the funds. I tell you, I'll make this pretty little isle a 'ome of 'appiness before I'm done . . ."

And at that moment, as if in comment, the Fomorians, labouring at the fish-curing, sang at their work the hymn beginning:

From Greenland's icy mahntains
To Afric's coral strands,
W'ere Injer's sunny fahntains
Roll dahn their golden sands,
They corl us to deliver
Their lives from error's chine,
They——

Topperley nodded. "Wonderful 'ow well the poet 'it it orf, ain't it?" he said. "'Ow nicely 'e put it abaht ahr Empire's 'igh mission of civilisation! Lor' bless me, you Irish don't know wot we're doing for you and yer likes. And nah let me 'ave my little arfter-dinner forty winks."

He closed his hands on his waistcoat, smiled, and nodded.

The sun must have been sinking below the sea horizon at this time. Its ruddy glare came through the gaps between the giant stones that

walled the hall, and lit up the chamber with a splendid luminance that emphasised its immensity. I looked up and saw how vast was the place in which we sat at the little table. The storm had passed, and there was a sweet wetness in the wind that accompanied the soughing and swishing of the sea. Some lines ran through my head:

> . . . In the afternoon of time
> A strenuous family dusted from its hands
> The sand of granite, and beholding far
> Along the sounding coast its pyramids
> And tall memorials take the dying sun,
> Smiled well content——

Strange (I reflected) how from the dawn of history, when they built their cromlechs on the mountain-tops, down to yesterday, when those lines were written, the peoples of the Gaelic countries have loved the sight of sunset on great stones, and found therein a magic that makes all time one . . .

My poetical reflections—which seemed to be but the reaction of a bewildered and wonder-wearied mind—were interrupted by a shrieking tumult that rose above the noise of wind and wave. There was the sound of blows, of curses in barbaric speech, of argument and of panic. A Fomorian youth ran into the hall and fell at Topperley's feet, trembling all over

and chattering. Topperley woke from his doze with an angry exclamation.

"Top'ly Pasha — 'elp — 'appy English children in trouble—wot do?—come and see."

Thus stuttered the one week's student of English, or rather of Cockney, certainly conveying some meaning of distress and need of help. No bad advertisement of Topperley's Colonial or Phrase Method of language teaching, said I to myself.

As for Topperley, he seemed to take the thing as being serious, for he got up and hurried from the hall, saying:

"Must see wot's the matter. 'Ope that there amateur Salvation Army 'asn't gorn ter war before we was prepared to cope with the Rising."

The Fomorian followed him, and I was left alone in the vast chamber. A voice addressed me in Irish:

"*Eist, a dhuine uasail. Cogar annso!*"

I turned from the door, and looked round the empty place.

"*Tá mé annso, a Ghaedhil uasail,*" said the voice.

I noticed that it proceeded from the end of the hall where the great stones were piled before the entrance to Balor's prison-cave.

CHAPTER XI

IN THE CAVE OF SKULLS

An Unexpected Ally—Civil War on the Island—The Mystery Boats—A Horrible Discovery—Topperley's Back to the Wall—The Pursuit.

"*Eist, a Ghaedhil uasail. Cogar annso!*"

These were the words that came to me from the door of Balor's prison-cave at the foot of his mighty hall. I went over to the stones that choked the door, and asked:

"Who is there?"

"My name is Goll Gara."

I remembered that the messenger sent by Conall Mór to seek help from the High-King of Ireland, but who had fallen into the Fomorians' hands, was named Goll Gara.

"So you escaped alive?" said I.

"I did, noble Gael," came the answer. "But my escape does not matter. What matters is that you or I should escape from

this place and get to the shores of Eire, and then seek help from the High-King. We have already lost ten days."

"That is true," said I. "But how are we to get from this cursed island?"

"We will make a dash to-night by moonlight, and try to get away in a boat."

"But how will you get out of that prison-cave? I am not strong enough to pull aside these great stones."

"Listen. You must join me here and hide till night with me. There is another entrance to this cave from the inside of that house where the Stranger of the Songs holds gatherings of the Fomorians."

"You mean where Horatio Topperley holds his Revival Meetings?"

"Is that the stranger's name?—*Oráis Toparlach?* And what does he call the gatherings?"

"Revival Meetings—*Conchruinnithe i gcóir Aithbheótha.*"

"Go to the house, then, noble Gael, where this Oráis Toparlach holds his gatherings and teaches his strange songs. It is a cave like this of Balor's, with big stones for a door. Get into it, and I will call you at the place where I have loosened a rock, and can let you through to the big underground caverns. Go as secretly as you can, and Toparlach will not

know where you are. Then you can lie low till night. *Slán leat anois.*"

"*Slán leat,*" said I, and Goll Gara's eyes disappeared from the crevice between the rocks. I turned to make my way through the vast empty hall to the door, taking with me the *Cathach.* I stepped into the whipping sea air, and saw the vast expanse of beach gleaming before me in the sunset.

About two hundred yards away, I saw a mass of struggling Fomorians smashing away at one another with clubs and sticks and spears—and screeching and yelling the while. Several were already laid out, and from the fury of the battle I judged that the whole island would be depopulated before morning.

The main part of the battle was raging near the entrance to Topperley's meeting-cave, so that I should have to pass close to the fight to reach my goal.

As for Topperley, I saw him with his crown upon his head, stamping with excitement on a rock close to the fight, and throwing his arms about, but whether he was cheering them on or trying to quieten them I could not tell, for his shouted words were drowned in the tumult.

I had no notion what the fight should be about, but every Fomorian in the island seemed eager to have part in it, for ones and twos from different directions would come

"TOPPERLEY WAS ON A ROCK NEAR THE FIGHT"

running to the mêlée and plunge into it, so that the place around me was quite clear, and I could walk among the stone huts and caves without any notice being taken of me.

I sped my way towards the doorway of the great cave, and passed close to the fight apparently without being observed—none of the belligerents had eyes for a neutral. I darted into the empty depths of the rocky chamber. But before I did so, I noticed one thing that startled and puzzled me. On the sea, between Tory and the mainland, was a swarm of boats under sail, splashing their way as speedily as such crude craft could, straight for the island.

What could be the meaning of this? Who were in those boats? Were the Fomorians under Balor returning in triumph, having overcome Conall Mór and his forces?

Full of anxiety and wonder, I hurried to the dark end of Topperley's meeting-cave, and cried:

"*Goll Gara! Goll Gara! Tá mé annso!*"

Again I cried these words, and then came an answer. Goll Gara's voice called me to a shadowy corner, and his lean, sinewy arm reached out to me in the darkness.

"*Coimhéad!*" said he, helping me through a dark, narrow cleft. He pulled a big rock over the place at which I had come through,

and I found myself in an earthy-smelling passage in which I could not see so much as a glimmer.

"We shall soon get to a lighter place," said Goll Gara, leading me along.

I told him of the fleet of boats that I had just observed. "But for that," said I, "we might have made a dash even now for the boats, for the fellows in the fight would not have noticed us."

"Can it be," asked Goll Gara, with a sudden break in his voice: "can it be that Balor is coming home victor? If so, *dar mo láimh*, I will slay him even though I die by the uttermost tortures."

Creeping through the dark passages under Balor's great hall, we suddenly found ourselves looking into a vast subterranean chamber, lit by crevices in the rocks through which the sea wind whistled.

But horrible was the sight of the floor of this great cave. It was white as snow with a litter of bones—skulls and skeletons lying in profuse and ghastly disorder. It would be impossible to count or estimate the number of the horrid relics, for they seemed to be heaped in many layers.

"What is the meaning of this?" I asked my companion.

"These are the bones of Balor's victims,"

THE CAVE OF SKULLS

he answered. "Balor used to fling down the remnants here after his horrible feasts. There are the relics of Fomorian and Firbolg and Gael—of whoever were the victims of Balor's wars. Tread carefully."

He led the way, picking his steps through a sort of clearing among the bones, towards the far end of the cavern.

"Listen!" he said.

I stood and listened. Below us, it seemed, there was a sound of beating water.

"There is a cave below us yet again," said Goll Gara, "letting out upon the sea. That is what I judge by that noise, but I have been unable to find the way to it. These skulls must choke the opening."

I shuddered. "Do you mean to say you were searching among these horrible relics?"

"Indeed yes. And if you will look back to the gap by which we entered this cave, you will see that I had to tear aside a heap of skulls to break open that entrance. When I was cast into Balor's prison-house, I roamed about these chambers in search of a way out. I was in this cavern, and heard Toparlach's singing, so I judged there must be a passage in that direction. I searched among the bones till I found it."

"Faith, you had courage. I would rather

face live Fomorians than dig among their bones."

All this time we were picking our way among the round, white, shell-like skulls, when I suddenly slipped on one, treading on the round, slippery surface—and fell headlong into a heap that crumpled under me.

Crackle and rend-d-d-d went the bones under the weight of my fall. Goll Gara tried to grasp my clothing and save me, but I plunged through——

Yes, THROUGH!

The heap of bones sustained me no more than would a snow-heap or a cardboard structure, for it was as frail as brittle paper, and was heaped lightly over a hole among the rocks. I struck my head against the stones and felt my limbs bruised, and when I opened my eyes—Goll Gara had disappeared.

So had the skulls—save a few shreds and scraps of bones beside me—and I lay on a bare rocky ledge with green water lapping near my feet. Around me I saw a medley of glistening metallic objects glimmering through the dusk—big wooden chests and sacks and items of strange furniture, stacks of quaint weapons and heaps of skins.

What had happened? Where was I?

"*A Dhuine uasail!*"

Goll Gara's voice sounded from above my

head, and, looking up, I saw a hole in the rocky roof of the cavern some ten feet above me, with my Gaelic friend looking down with an alarmed and anxious countenance.

"Are you injured, noble person?"

"No," said I; "but what has happened?"

"You fell through the entrance to the under-cavern, noble person. So we have found the entrance to it by accident. What are all those strange things showing through the dark?"

I told him.

"Plunder!" he observed. "This is Balor's secret treasure-house that we have found. Look at the channel of water that runs into it. That finds its way out to the sea, you may be sure, so that a boat could get away from here."

Goll Gara was right. A creek of luminous green ran into the cave like a little natural harbour. At the head of it I saw a rough wooden raft beached on the rocky shelf.

"Well," said I, "and what are we to do next? Could we not escape from here instead of trying to get past Topperley and his subjects?"

"Surely, but what of those boats you saw before you came into the cave?"

"Aye, we must make sure the sea is clear before we try to sail."

"*Eist!*"

Goll Gara stood in a listening attitude, finger on lips.

"What is it?" I whispered.

"The voice of Oráis Toparlach," he answered. He unswung his plaid of saffron cloth and lowered its end to me.

"Catch hold," said he.

I caught it, twisted it about my wrists, and in a moment he had lifted me into the Cave of Skulls by main strength.

"Listen now," said he.

I strained my ears, and caught the hollow echoing sound of voices. Goll Gara drew me after him, stepping lightly, through a passage from the Cave of Skulls into a darker chamber.

"This is Balor's prison-house," he whispered in my ear.

Then I heard Topperley's voice.

"Blime yer, yer woolly-'eaded nincompoop, bring me the grub, will yer?"—thus he was shouting.

"Bring me the beef and the flarsks, will yer? Bless my 'eart and soul, I believe you fellers would rather save yer skins than the grub. Look slippy, too, and getter move on, fer we're in for a bloomin' siege, that's wot it is. Get yer bows and arrers, too."

"What does this mean?" I asked Goll Gara.

"I know not, noble person, for I do not understand this stranger's speech."

"Bung up the doorwai wiv stones and rocks," shouted Topperley's voice. "Close up every wye inter this 'ere plice. Urry! urry! urry! or ole Balfour 'ull get 'ere before we're sife."

I knew that Balfour was Topperley's word for Balor, so I saw from this that Balor was on the island again—that, then, was the meaning of the boats I had seen coming.

"Bless me, w'y did I ever leave my comfy little 'ome at 'appy 'Amstead?" Topperley wailed. "Wot did I ever come ter this 'ere country for? 'Ere am I wiv my back ter ther wall. O my!"

Shrieks and shouts rose in the distance, and I heard the voice of conflict. I could just see into the cave by the little gap between the rocks where before I had seen Goll Gara's eyes.

"'It 'em! 'it 'em!" Topperley's voice shouted. "Don't let 'em come near me. Keep 'em awai from the cave."

His voice was full of terror, so that I judged his party was being attacked at the entrance to the cave, and that he was shouting encouragement to them through the rocks. He seemed to have no companions within the cave. He had got them to shut him in with food, and was leaving them to fight outside.

"Go it, nipper!" he shouted to one of them.

"Give 'im a biff on the boko! Strike for Old England and the Hempire! 'It 'ard and I'll give yer an extrer drop next pai-dai. Ow! nah you've done it—*you're* done for nah."

Judging from his disappointed voice, the one he had been cheering on had fallen.

"Ow! yah! yah! yah!" he cried. "There's ole Balfour 'imself a-goin' for 'em. 'Igh, stop it, you 'Un, you bloomin' Tariff Reformer. Leave my pore fellers alone, will yer? Ow, you brute, done fer them all, 'ave yer?"

"No, you ain't so bad arfter all. Let's make friends. Let's rule together. I'll give you 'Ome Rule for the island if you'll make friends."

Topperley was pleading now, shouting conciliatory words to Balor, who seemed to have broken down the resistance of Topperley's guard.

"I orlways said you wasn't so bad as you was painted, ole chap. I'll 'ave your picture put in the picture papers, and I'll get your name into ther next list of Birthday Honours if you'll only make friends. . . ."

I heard a roaring and hoarse voice, like the voice of a wild beast, and the noise of the rending of rocks.

"Ow! ow! ow! 'e's coming at me. 'E won't listen to reason! 'E wants ter eat me! Wot will I do?" Topperley screamed out

these words and ran round and round the cave in panic.

"*Mr. Topperley!*"

"*Mr. Horatio Topperley!*"

He heard me at the second calling, and screeched louder.

"I'm 'ornted! I'm 'ornted! I'm 'ornted!" he cried. "There's my pore mother's voice a-calling at me! Ow-w-w-w!"

"Don't be a fool!" I shouted. "It is I, Robert Mac Dara, that am calling you."

Topperley only screamed the louder.

"It's the D.T.'s!" he cried. "I orter 'ave known not to drink so much of that there Irish potcheen. I never 'ad them so bad before. W'y, it sounds as if someone was trying to get at me. . . . W'ere am I? . . . Wot's that 'orrid fice a-looking through the rocks?"

In sheer panic, he fell on the ground of the cave and rolled to the very spot where Goll Gara and I were watching at the little gap between the great stones. I reached out a hand and caught him by the collar.

"Crash! Splinter! Shatter!"

Balor was tearing down the rocks that had been piled at the entrance to the cave, and his panting breath could be heard.

"There's not a minute to lose," I said to Topperley. "Use all your strength now, and

help myself and my friend here to move this rock."

Topperley heard, understood, and suddenly sobered.

Together the three of us heaved at the great rock. It moved, and Topperley squeezed through and stood beside Goll Gara and myself in Balor's prison-cave just as a tremendous clatter showed that Balor had broken his way into his great hall.

"Lead on!" said I to Goll Gara, and "Follow me!" to Topperley. We hurried through the dark passage as Balor raged round the vast cavern above hunting for his expected victim.

CHAPTER XII

A FENIAN RESCUE

[*At this point I set down a further instalment of Colum's narrative, which describes the amazing climax of our adventures.*—R. MacD.]

Second Day.—I have told how the retreating forces of Conall Mór were brought to a standstill by the discovery of big forces of Fomorians camped in the gap of the mountains. We halted and called a council of war, at which Ugaine, the War Leader, presided. Manus and myself were present.

"There is nothing for it," said Ugaine, "but for us to attempt to rush the gap. There are two hundred of the enemy, but if we attack them by surprise we may succeed in bursting through, though at heavy cost to ourselves."

The rest concurred, and the council then began to discuss whether it would be wisest to attack forthwith or wait till nightfall. It would be easier to effect a thorough surprise at night, but, on the other hand, it would be perilous and difficult work getting our big array of non-combatants through the fighting zone if the Fomorians put up any sort of serious fight.

Suddenly Manus rose to his feet, with the look he always wears when a bright idea has struck him. "I think," he said, "that I have a plan that will help us here." He asked Ugaine to give him a private audience to enable him to explain the scheme. Ugaine consented and the two went aside and consulted. I saw Manus figuring about with his hands, and at last draw something from our provision wallet, which he pointed to as if it were dynamite or some other munition-of-war. Ugaine was stroking his chin all this time and listening very critically. Then he sniffed at the substance in Manus's hand, and began sneezing violently. The two came back to the council circle.

"Our young comrade here," said Ugaine, "has submitted to me a ruse which I have examined carefully and approved. The orders are, to halt until night, and be ready to continue the march when I shall give the signal.

Ten picked kerns will be told off immediately to accompany Manus and Colum in an exploit, the nature of which will reveal itself in due course. That is all. *Sin uilig*." He clapped his hands and the conference ended.

Manus told me to get the guns and all ammunition and join him at the van of the halted forces. There I found ten youths drawn up awaiting his orders. To each of these he gave a mysterious packet, and he whispered instructions to each. Then we began a march towards the gap where the Fomorians lay. We went by wooded bye-paths and in single file, a long distance between each, Manus leading with a scout, and myself bringing up the rear. Darkness was falling.

Night had come when through the tangled trees we saw the red gleam of the Fomorians' fires. Manus halted, and our little company closed up. "Conall Mór and all the clan are on the march at full speed along the high road now," he said. "They will be here in less than half-an-hour, since they will move more quickly than we who had to follow bye-paths. We must get quickly to work."

He then went on to give detailed instructions. I myself was ordered to proceed along the path on which we stood, until I reached a certain point of vantage looking down on the camp-fires. There I was to wait, with my gun

and half the ammunition, until Manus should give me the signal by firing the first shot. "After that, blaze away according to your discretion, which we all know to be great," said he.

Next he sent the ten kerns with their mysterious packages moving through the undergrowth in a big semicircle, himself at the extremity, for he was to take up a position corresponding to mine, but on the other side of the Fomorian encampment. Thus our little company began to move on the Fomorians in the form of a sickle.

I reached my appointed place in a few seconds, and prepared for action. I cuddled in behind a big rock, and strewed a couple of dozen cartridges on the earth convenient to my hand. I saw that the breech of the gun (which was double-barrelled) was working freely, and slipped in two cartridges. I then peered down from my cover on the strange scene of the encampment. Six big camp-fires blazed in the gap, which was about a hundred yards wide, on either side of the rough road. Some coarse dens of stone and turf had been thrown up, but most of the savage creatures were lolling round the fires, some talking, some drinking or devouring raw meat, while others lay in apparent stupour. All had their barbaric weapons near them. They had,

however, no regular sentinels, and there was no sign of system or discipline in the wild assembly.

I watched silently for some sign of our kerns. I could not, as yet, guess what Manus's plan was, and I was beginning to wonder to myself whether, indeed, he really had some ruse in hand, or whether he was not blundering through not recognising how formidable an obstacle this encampment of fierce animal-men was. Then, of a sudden, my eye caught a glimpse of one of the kerns just where the gleam of one of the camp-fires flickered into darkness. I looked more carefully, and unless I was dreaming, I could see one or two of our company moving in the shadows beyond each one of the fires.

"*Wh-h-h-h-h-h-ssttt!*"

What was it rang on the night air but the sound of Manus's whistle. It was a signal, clearly, for instantly I saw something small and black fly from the shadows into each of the camp-fires. The kerns had flung their packets, one or two into each fire, and now disappeared from my view.

Well, what was to happen?

What was to happen, but that a strange black fume sprang from each fire, and instantly the Fomorians around each fire set to sneezing and coughing in a violent manner. They rose

from the places they sat in and ran to and fro; the sleeping ones awoke and joined the medley, and all the time, all of them were sneezing and spluttering like students in a chemical laboratory who have been attacked by a smelly gas. I guessed then what had happened. Those packets, thrown into the camp-fires, contained pepper! I remembered that Manus, among the items which we had brought from Portabeg, had brought a huge quantity of red pepper in mistake for cocoa. I had heard how meetings had been broken up by burning pepper, but never had I expected to see the old practical joke turned to practical account in this fashion!

To and fro the Fomorians ran, sneezing and coughing, and now getting blinded by the pungent smoke, so that they began to knock into one another, and sometimes tumble into the camp-fires. Such a din they made! Shouts and screeches and curse-like exclamations filled the air. But over it all, like the superb sound of the sea over the noise of a city, I heard what thrilled me—the full-throated Gaelic cheer! Loud, loud it rang, and in the shadows I saw the gleam of weapons in the hands of Ugaine's leading warriors. The clan was marching up.

It was then that a shot rang out from the other side of the pass, fired by Manus, and a

big, blustering bully who, with spiked club, had been trying to beat some order into the raging mass of savages, fell, with the back of his head almost blown away, into the crimson flames of one of the fires. I knew that for my signal, and loosed both barrels of my own gun into the spluttering medley. As fast as my fingers would work, I reloaded and fired and fired again, while Manus, from the other side, blazed away with equal rapidity. The noise of the guns mixed with the renewed Gaelic cheering, while the shots poured in on them, completed the terror with which the savages were now possessed. When, in a few minutes, the clan marched up, the Fomorians were too hopelessly panic-stricken to organise any resistance, and the whole host passed safely through the gap without a single casualty. A small contingent was told off to complete the Fomorians and scatter the demoralised fugitives so that they would not be able to recover themselves or make an organised body again.

So the clan was now safe in the mountains in the great glen behind Mount Arrigal and the Poison Mount, *Beann-na-Nimhe*. Ugaine pushed the march on for a mile or two, and then, at a spot strongly fortified by Nature in that it was lifted above the surrounding land on a small eminence bounded by confused

rocks and a broken river, we pitched our camp.

Third Day.—Next day, dawn found our encampment perfectly organised, for during the dark hours our strong youths had worked in relays to reinforce the natural fortification with huge boulders rolled down from the mountain side. A stream from a cliff shot right into our stony fort, so that we were sure of water. To approach us from the lower end of the glen meant climbing a precipitous path right under the shadow of our rock-built bulwark. To our flank was the river, with the Poison Mount beyond. To our rere lay the upper entrance of the glen, towards which our defence was weakest, but we hardly expected to be attacked from this quarter, since an enormous detour of mountainous country would need to be made by an enemy wishing to reach that end of the glen from the country we had left.

The day dragged on, and the enemy made no sign. Our hopes began to rise, for if the Fomorians delayed their attack, there would be time for help to reach us from the High King. News of the Fomorian outbreak must have penetrated inland by this time, and the Irish armies would soon be on the move. That at least was the view I expressed to Ugaine, but the War Leader shook his grave head

slowly. "I fear," said he, "that we need not hope for help in less than a fortnight or three weeks. We must do our best to hold out here. I have sent our scouts to explore the upper reaches of the glen, and report whether we could send the non-combatants inland in small parties. But I fear the mountain paths are nigh impassable save for our active youths."

At sunset, as we walked thus beside the rampart, we saw a small figure leaping from rock to rock, hastening down the mountain side.

"*One of my scouts!*" said Ugaine.

The kern at last came panting into the camp, and so to Ugaine's presence.

"Well—?" the War Leader asked.

"They are massing for attack," the messenger gasped out. "I spied their hosts below the gap—thousands of them. They were on the march in companies of two hundred. The first company must be in the gap by this."

The word went instantly round the encampment to prepare for battle. The non-combatants were sent into the centre or heart of the camp. The fighting men divided into three divisions to act in relays. They were then distributed round the square of the camp, only a few on the flanks, where no fighting was expected, and the bulk on the northern front facing down the glen towards the gap.

Dusk fell, and we sighted none of the enemy. Dark followed, and still they did not come. Long night hours we watched and waited, but nothing happened, save that the wild war-signal was shouted once or twice in the dark distance.

Our fighting men watched in relays, each third retiring after three hours for rest, being relieved by another third. It was after the second relay that I stood with Ugaine on the bulwark trying to pierce the darkness with eager eyes. The mountain outlines were sharp against the stars, but no sign of dawn was yet appearing.

"*Yo—hh-rr-ppp!*"

It was the Fomorian war-whoop that shivered through the night air, sounding from high up the mountain across the glen.

"*Yo-ho—hh-rrpppp!*"

It was repeated from behind us, on the other side of the glen, and yet again—

"*Yo-ho-ho—hh-rrr-pppppp!*"

It sounded a third time, far, far away through the night, but this time—*from the upper end of the glen!*

"*By the Dagda!*" quoth Ugaine. "*We are surrounded!*"

The war-whoop had sounded from all four quarters, so that the Fomorians must have thrown their forces to all sides of the camp.

At once Ugaine sent orders through the encampment, and the disposition of our fighting men was changed, so that all sides were equally guarded.

Dawn glimmered.

"The fight will begin soon," Ugaine whispered to me; and I looked to my gun, preparing to take a place along the gap-side rampart. And even as the War Leader spoke, the war-whoop rang out again, but this time from the rere of the camp, that is, the side towards the top of the glen. The amazing thing, that the whoop was from quite close to the rampart, as if the circle of Fomorians had drawn close.

"*Ya-ha-ha—pp-hff!*"

"*Pp-h-ff!*"

"*Pp-h-ff!*"

The whoops again were shouted from the four sides of the camp, in each case from close at hand.

Dawn strengthened.

BANG!!!

A shot sounded, and the glen was filled with echoes that rolled from side to side—BANG!!! BANG!! *Bang!* Bang!

Manus had fired, presumably at some Fomorian who had appeared at the rere rampart.

And then—the air was filled with a pande-

monium of screeches, and the attack began on all sides at once. Stones and arrows and hurled spears hurtled to and fro across the bulwark, the tumult punctuated by the *bang!-bang!* of our two shot-guns. Alas! our fire-arms no longer scared the savage hosts, and the harmless pellets in their brawny limbs only stung them to fresh fury. Again and again they surged in ferocious waves against the stony walls, beaten back again and again, till the boulders were crimson and white with the blood of the enemy and the foam from their animal mouths.

A respite came about midday, but it lasted but a little while, and then an attack more terrific than any that had gone before was launched.

It was hand-to-hand work now, for the enemy swept over the rampart like a living billow, and in the battle-fury they recked nothing of their enormous casualties. In a few moments, we saw to our dismay that they had taken the walls. The attack relaxed a little, but we could not now regain our strong position at the ramparts, so Ugaine ordered the ranks to close up into a compact square.

Our position was now desperate. The word went round to make a sudden and unexpected charge, but ere we could obey, the Fomorians themselves doubled to charge down on us.

"OUR POSITION WAS NOW DESPERATE"

Conall Mór rose from his sick-couch and wrung our hands. "I grieve to have brought you to this," he said, "but we die together for Eire. The Fomorians have overcome our arms by numbers, but not our spirits. *Dubhshlán na Féinne fútha!*"

Crash!—came the first ranks of the charge upon us, and reeled back, leaving us unbroken but weakened.

The enemy's second rank came down. We stuck our spear-ends into the earth and turned the points out, low and menacing, holding our skians in our left hands, ready for the close work of the finish.

On they came!

On——

But . . . .

Suddenly the charging ranks wavered, stopped, and hesitated . . .

What had happened?

Wonder of wonders!—the enemy turned. Turned and—ran!

Ranks and ranks of swift-footed, mighty men were between us and the screaming savages—hundreds of tall, strong heroes. We were saved!

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The Fomorians were in flight and our

rescuers after them, when one swift-eyed, kingly man turned back from the triumphant heroes, made his way to the camp, and to the very place where Conall Mór lay, propped on his elbow. The stranger dropped on his knee.

"*The homage of the Fianna to you, O King!*" he said.

"Who—who art thou?" asked Conall, wondering.

"*I am Fionn, the son of Cual, of the Clann Baoisgne, Captain of the Seven Fenian Battalions.*"

Fionn M'Coul had saved us.

He explained that Robert Mac Dara had met him two hundred years later—two hundred years down the River of Time—and had told him of our plight. He had rallied the Fianna, come with them up the River, and rescued us just as Cousin Robert had hoped.

But where was Robert now?

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It was not long before the Fenians had swept the panic-stricken Fomorians down to the sea. Balor, when he saw the swift-footed Fianna herding his hosts like sheep, took ship and fled for Tory Island with as many boats as he could get. Manus and I, with Ugaine,

reached the top of the big hill at Maheraroarty as the little fleet of fugitives pushed out from the rocky shore below. Beside us stood the leading champions of the Fianna—great, splendid men, leaning on their reddened spears.

"Volunteers!" cried Oscar—and all who were present lifted their weapons in sign of readiness for whatever the young hero proposed.

"We must swim after them," Oscar said. Oisin and Diarmuid agreed, and the three comrades moved down towards the foaming waters, followed by a whole battalion. Into plashing billows the heroes plunged, and began the nine-mile swim after the retreating boats. Manus and Ugaine and myself found a deserted curragh, and set sail in the wake of the chase.

In the distance, over the heaving waters, we could see Balor land, and soon after the leading swimmers of the Fianna. The Fomorian King took refuge in his great cavern. The Fianna set to pulling down the rocks to break in. Our curragh came to shore just as they had broken the walls down.

We three followed Oisin and Oscar in the great barbaric hall. The sea wind sang in its rocky recesses and lofty shadows, but there was no sign of Balor. The hall was empty.

But while we hunted, wondering where the giant savage had taken refuge, a familiar voice came to me :

"*Beatha agus sláinte!*"

Cousin Robert stood before me, having just climbed through a gap in the rocks at the foot of the cave. He was followed by the grotesque figure of Horatio Topperley and a youthful Gael whom I later knew as Goll Gara.

"How came you here?—Where is Balor?"

Robert led us into a dark cave below the hall, and along a cavernous passage into a vast hall of skulls.

Balor lay dead in the midst!

"Explain!" said Manus.

Cousin Robert showed his revolver. "Right through the eye . . ." he said—"Balor's vital spot." And he related how Balor was making his way after him when a single shot through that vital organ saved the three fugitives. Very proudly, as Robert finished his story, Goll Gara drew a beautiful jewelled object from beneath his plaid.

"We have saved the Cathach too!" he said.

Topperley touched me on the sleeve.

"I say, young feller-me-lad," said he, "*'ave yer got a bite of grub abaht yer?*"

(END OF COLUM'S NARRATIVE.)

* * * * * * *

Back we went to the mainland, my two cousins and I, with Ugaine and the Fenian champions in triumph. Twenty boat-loads of treasure from Balor's cave of plunder followed us, wherewith to restore Dún-na-Gael. Fionn M'Coul laid the treasure at Conall Mór's feet, and great was our feast that night—a Feast of the Fianna. Even Topperley said it "wasn't arf bad—orlmost good ernough fer Frascarti's."

Three days and three nights the feast lasted, and the last night was better than the first.

Next morning Colum and Manus and I set off down the Druid's River for Portabeg, while the Fianna gave three shouts on the hill at our departure. Conall Mór and Ugaine and Cathba the Druid watched and waved after us while we were in sight.

Through the Druid's Cave we went, and back into the Twentieth Century at Portabeg.

"Bless my 'art," said Topperley, "but this 'ere would make good copy fer a special article in *The Bull Dog*, only the readers 'ud think it orl rose through me drinking too much John Jameson. Give us a bite of them sandwiches."

So that is the end of our adventures up Awandree thus far.

Buidheachas le Dia!

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